

Independent Child Migration in the Developing World:

Victims of trafficking and child labor, or autonomous economic actors?

Case Studies—Togo and India

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Abstract

Child trafficking and child labor are two terms that tend to elicit vivid images of suffering and there are countless IGOs, NGOs, advocacy organizations, government programs, and pieces of legislation worldwide that aim to combat both. Using two small rural communities in India and in Togo as primary case studies, I argue that the definitions of these two terms, upon which international and national laws are predicated, are far too vague. They ignore the reality of independent child migrants by failing to account for children's agency, however structurally constrained that agency might be. While child trafficking and child labor are frequently discussed, independent child migrants are not as well understood. This ethnographic and policy study examines the following question--what are the ways in which the dominant international discourse on child trafficking and child labor is incongruous with the real economic predicaments of independent child migrants? How might we rethink these normative understandings of childhood and labor in order to allow for the possibility of children's agency and create policy that accordingly supports youth migratory endeavors, while still mitigating the negative aspects of the migration of independent child migrants? Though potentially controversial, I argue that the limited resources of the governments in countries where child migration is an issue would be more effective if allocated toward making this migration safer and its economic returns more reliable, rather than toward simple interdiction--a shift toward support in the place of mere protection. This strategy requires a new, culturally-appropriate conceptualization of "childhood" and of what economic activities are acceptable for children partake in. Both "developed" and "developing" countries can work toward this goal by conducting more research and supporting grassroots intervention initiatives that rely on local knowledge of the history, culture, and unique situation of each population in the place of historically problematic top-down "solutions."

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List of Abbreviations

- **CRC**- Convention on the Rights of the Child
- **HDI**- Human Development Index
- **HIPC**- Highly-Indebted Poor Countries
- **IGO**- Intergovernmental Organization
- **ILO**- International Labor Organization
- **ILO-IPEC**- International Program on the Elimination of Child Labor
- **IMF**- International Monetary Fund
- **MGNREGA**- Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
- **NGO**- Non-governmental Organization
- **SAPs**- Structural Adjustment Policies
- **TIP**- Trafficking in Persons
- **TVPA**- Victims of Trafficking and Violence Prevention Act
- **UN**- United Nations
- **UNDP**- United Nations Development Program
- **UNFPA**- United Nations Population Fund
- **UNICEF**- United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund
- **UNODC**- United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime
- **USAID**- U.S. Agency for International Development
- **WFCLC**- Worst Forms of Child Labor Convention

List of Definitions

- **Agency**- The capacity of individuals to act independently and to make their own free choices.
- **Child**- any person below the age of 18
 - o Note: This standard is questioned, deconstructed, and put into cultural context in the paper.
- **Circular migration**- Internal or international migration punctuated by sporadic or regular return trips to the migrant's home for a varying length of time. Migrant does not stay home or at destination permanently. Migrant may or may not migrate to the same location each time he or she leaves home.
- **(Independent) migrant child**- a child who may or may not be in conditions that would be considered exploitative, but has migrated out of own volition.
 - o Note: "Independent child migrant" and simply "child migrant" are used interchangeably in the paper.
- **Internal migration**- Regional or inter-state migration. Migrant does not cross national borders.
- **International migration**- Migrant crosses national borders.
- **Pro-child study**- A type of study that takes into account children's agency and actively involves children in the research process, seeking their opinions and perspectives directly rather than through inference.
- **Repatriation**- The act of returning a migrant to his or her place of origin or citizenship.
 - o Note: This term is employed in academic literature to refer to both a migrant who has been ejected by the immigration authorities of a country he or she has crossed into illegally and also to refer simply to a migrant who has left home, been apprehended, and been returned home.

- **Trafficked child**- a child who has migrated out of serious deception or against his or her will for the purpose of unambiguous exploitation.
 - o Note: The officially accepted definition is articulated in the Palermo Protocol and will be discussed in section 1.1 of the paper.
- **(Young) Youth**- any person between the ages of 15 and 25.
 - o Note: This term has been used by academics to refer to a demographic often thought of as “young adults.” In some cases I spoke to migrants who were aged beyond 18, but were still considered “young” or as “youth” by members of their community.

A Note on Confidentiality and Identity Protection


The names of every individual mentioned in the body of this paper were changed for the protection of my interview subjects. The names of the villages I conducted research in, surrounding villages and, in the case of India, block and *panchayat* names were also changed. The pictures used along with the migrant profiles in Chapter 2 were taken with the subject's consent.

Foreword

When I first went into the field in 2012, I thought I was going to study child trafficking in Togo. I, like most Westerners who have been highly exposed to images of poverty and child rights abuses, thought of this phenomenon as unambiguously terrible and believed it should be stopped at all costs. However, the responsibility to truthfully represent the experiences of my interviewees necessitated the exploration of a different side of this dominant narrative, one in which children migrate of their own volition and live out both good and bad outcomes. As I will discuss further in the paper, this is a highly complex and morally charged issue that has been difficult for me to negotiate and articulate. By focusing on independent child migrants, I in no way wish to de-emphasize or belittle the truly horrible reality of children who *are* victims of crimes such as trafficking and forced labor. Instead I seek to increase the visibility of another group of migrants that is often miscategorized or overlooked, and to complicate the prevailing understanding of the issues surrounding child trafficking and child labor.

This is a hybrid thesis written for both the department of Cultural Anthropology and the department of Public Policy at Duke University. Although they are decidedly different disciplines, I find that pairing the two can be highly productive for two reasons. First, because effective policy cannot be made without a true understanding of the people it affects and second, because although anthropology complicates phenomena under scrutiny and necessitates a nuanced, culturally-relevant view of these issues, it does not typically venture to offer concrete solutions. I see this project as an attempt to bridge the two—entreating policymakers to consider the anthropological side of independent child migration and to explore whether policy, when well-informed by ethnographic data, could be used to ameliorate some of the unfavorable situations these children do face.

Maria C. Romano

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Maria C. Romano". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a horizontal line crossing through the middle of the name.

Introduction

Sitting in the courtyard of my homestead in a small rural village in northern Togo, I asked François and Jacob, two young men who lived next door with my host mother's mother-in-law, what their plans for the summer were now that they were finished with their final exams¹. They looked at each other and grinned. Jacob answered that they were preparing to leave the village soon to cultivate on farms in Benin (about a day's journey away) for a month in order to earn money for next year's school fees². François, now 20 years old, had migrated for work several times before, starting at just 16 years old, and Jacob, now 17, was faisant l'aventure³ for the first time. They weren't yet sure of their departure date, but François, as the most experienced one, was going to lead the way and hire a car to sneak them and a few other boys in the village across the border. In his past experiences François had also been guided by a slightly older male whom he refers to as his "grand frère," regardless of the lack of blood-relation⁴. François had worked for the same, relatively wealthy, family for the past three years and said that they were very nice and hospitable-- "They gave us boys a nice room to sleep in and cooked us good meals every day." How much he was paid always depended on how much he worked, which depended in part on the rain. In general, however, he claimed he was paid well, an average of 20,000-25,000 CFA (\$42-\$52 USD) per month because Togolese boys are known in the area for being good cultivators. "With any luck," he said "I'll make enough money to buy new clothes too!"

Six months later and 4,948 miles away I met a young migrant named Suresh in Gurutaraj, a small village in Rajasthan, India. Suresh was 22 years old at the time and had been migrating for work since age 16. Suresh decided to drop out of school after 9th grade because he had visited his sister recently in Mumbai, was attracted to the big city and thought he could make a lot of money there. Plus, he "was not really doing well in [his] studies anyway." He worked in Mumbai for six or seven months making and selling street food with his brother-in-law who employed him. Even though it was tiring, as he woke up to make the food at 4am and sold it out on the street until 10pm, he claimed he liked the work and felt satisfied with the money he made. Of the 3,000 rupees per month (\$50 USD) that he made (which eventually rose to 4,500 rupees/month), Suresh kept about rs. 500 (\$8 USD) for living expenses and sent the rest to his family with someone he knew who was leaving Mumbai for his village or thereabouts. If he couldn't find anyone he would give it in an envelope to a bus driver he knew and trusted. Eventually Suresh tired of Mumbai, came home for a month or so, and left again, this time for Ahmedabad, a large city in Gujarat and a common destination for Rajasthani labor migrants. He found a job at a steel plant and now works as a contractor where he makes over 9,000 rupees/month (\$150 USD). Suresh says his family uses the money he sends them for food, clothing, medical expenses, farming equipment, and other expenditures. Since he acts primarily

¹ Sections in italics shall henceforth indicate a story from the field.

² This practice of earning money over the summer to pay for the following year's school fees is referred to as *faire la rentrée*.

³ *Faire l'aventure* translates roughly to "to go on adventure." This phrase is used in Togo to refer to the migration of youth in general, including migration in search of employment and for pleasure or adventure.

⁴ *Grande freres* and *grand soeurs* are generally older youth or young adults in Togo who *connait le chemin*—or know the way—and will, in theory, show their charges the way like an older sibling would. This term, however much it indicates closeness, it not always a guarantee that that intermediary holds the younger migrant's well-being as his or her first priority.

as a supervisor at the steel plant, he says his job is “not too tiring” and he plans to continue working in Ahmedabad for several more years, returning home intermittently for festivals and to visit his family.

Child trafficking and child labor are two terms that tend to elicit vivid images of suffering and outrage, especially in the West, and there are countless IGOs, NGOs, advocacy organizations, government programs, and pieces of legislation worldwide that aim to combat both. Using two small rural communities in India and in Togo as primary case studies, I argue that the definitions of these two terms, upon which international and national laws are predicated, are far too vague. They ignore the reality of independent child migrants such as François, Jacob, and Suresh by failing to account for children’s agency, however “thin”⁵ or structurally constrained that agency might be.

Independent child migrants are minors who consensually leave their homes for some purpose. In this paper I will focus on independent child *labor* migrants, minors who leave their homes in search of employment, but they will be referred to henceforth as independent child migrants or simply child migrants. Many of the children and youth I spoke to throughout this three year project exhibited extraordinary agency and migrated voluntarily. Because their home communities are experiencing an exodus of young laborers and because misfortune does befall some of them, national governments like those of Togo and India have attempted, unsuccessfully, to stop this migration through various interventions.

When I first began working on this project, I was constantly asking myself whether youth migration was good or bad. If it were bad, I wondered whether or not it could be stopped, and if it were good, whether this could be substantiated with evidence that it was “helping to develop” home communities through remittances from labor. I have since concluded that youth migration can be good, bad, or both. It is much more complicated than this simple binary. Independent child migrants live in a variety of different social and economic circumstances and can live out different outcomes--some beneficial, some detrimental. The same applies to the question of whether child migration is beneficial to the home communities. Sometimes families greatly benefit from the remittances sent home by their children, and sometimes families or villages as a whole suffer more from the loss of labor that these youth contribute and the social value they add than they benefit from their remittances. As for whether the phenomenon can be stopped, the stories of resilience, determination, and bravery that I was fortunate enough to hear led me to believe that the movement of youth cannot be stopped as long as economic insecurity in their communities persists.

Though potentially controversial, I argue that the limited resources of the governments in countries where child migration is an issue would be more effective if allocated toward making this migration safer and its economic returns more reliable, rather than toward simple interdiction--a shift toward support in the place of mere protection. This strategy requires a new, culturally-appropriate conceptualization of “childhood” and of what economic activities are acceptable for children partake in.

⁵ See discussion of “thin” agency in section 2.3.

Making youth migration safer is not, of course, a long-term solution. The ultimate goals of the international community, national governments, NGOs, and other relevant institutions should be economic growth at the macro-level and the expansion of sustainable employment opportunities for the communities in question, along with a revamping of rural education systems--for only under these conditions will migrating for employment cease to be so attractive to young people. Ultimately, this ethnographic and policy study examines the following question--what are the ways in which the dominant international discourse on child trafficking and child labor is incongruous with the real economic predicaments of independent child migrants? How might we rethink these normative understandings of childhood and labor in order to allow for the possibility of children's agency and create policy that accordingly supports youth migratory endeavors, while still mitigating the negative aspects of the migration of independent child migrants?

While child trafficking and child labor are frequently discussed, independent child migrants are not as well understood. The number of these young migrants varies from country to country and community to community, but the reasons these children give for migrating are largely the same—poverty, occasionally the death or serious illness of a parent and the responsibility of earning for one's family, academic shortcomings or the need to earn school fees, low agricultural productivity and scarce alternative local employment, insufficient public investment in essential economic and social services, the desire for adventure, or simply the desire to earn money for themselves. Many of these young migrants take active roles in regards to their migratory decisions and take pride in contributing to their families' livelihoods. Due to certain normative conceptions of childhood, this agency is often overlooked, leading to gaps in research by migration experts, gaps in services provided to these migrants by non-governmental organizations, and gaps in government policy.

For example, although François and Jacob are close in age and good friends, the fact that the boys were paid unfairly low wages, that their work could be considered exploitative, and that Jacob and some of the other boys were under 18 years old at the time would mean that François could be considered a trafficker of children by most laws. The minors would be considered victims of trafficking even though they fully consented to their transportation and subsequent employment. Though Suresh was clearly working unfairly long hours for little pay, even when employed by a relative, it was his decision to leave the village in search of employment and in under a year he acquired a job that he is much happier with, one that helps him provide for his family, and even though \$150 USD/month still seems like a terribly low sum of money, it is over the minimum wage for even "highly skilled" workers in Rajasthan (Department of Labour and Employment, 2014). These are common stories among independent child migrants, even if they have differing outcomes, different levels of "success" or "failure."

In this paper I have included ethnographic data from months of fieldwork in Togo and in India, an exploration of relevant international and national policy, and an analysis of primary documents, predominantly U.S. Embassy cables, that detail the State Department's anti-TIP efforts around the world. I also consulted studies conducted by child rights advocacy organizations as well as the growing body of academic research on independent child migrants as a population separate from victims of trafficking or child laborers. There are few working

models of policies that are inclusive of independent child migrants and both their capacity for agency as well as their vulnerabilities. Even so, both “developed” and “developing” countries can work toward this goal by conducting more pro-child⁶ research (both in sending regions and at destination) and supporting grassroots intervention initiatives that rely on local knowledge of the history, culture, and unique situation of each population in the place of historically problematic top-down “solutions.”

Methods:

Togo

In the two months I lived in northern Togo, from May 2012 to July 2012, I completed 28 qualitative interviews with migrant youth and their parents, community members including neighbors of mine, school teachers, religious leaders, village chiefs, NGO workers, and government officials. I set up official interviews through my translator, an integral member of the village community, but I listened to anyone who wanted to talk with me about youth migration. My translator and I made a conscious effort to choose both men and women of all ages. This came to include young people who had previously migrated, young people who had never migrated but who had friends or siblings who had, and older people with children who may or may not have left the village in search of employment. These interviews typically lasted about an hour and were conducted in French, Kabiye⁷, or sometimes a mix of both. My questions were largely open-ended as I wanted to gain an understanding of the community’s experience with and perception of youth migration. When interviewing young Kabre or their parents, my goal was to roughly map out the migration history of the household by asking who in the family had migrated and to where, for what kind of work, at what age, for how long, what their experience was like, and so on.

Slowly I started to learn more and more about the different pathways available to young people aspiring to earn money for themselves and their families, what the process of leaving the village was like, the different type of work young men and women could expect at destination, the differences between working in southern Togo, Benin, and Nigeria (the most common destinations), and most importantly how the community was responding to this phenomenon. While all of these things gave me insight into the *nature* of youth migration, the scope was still unclear. To determine how many young people were leaving the village each year and how many of those were travelling abroad to Benin, Nigeria, and potentially other neighboring countries, I began to gather quantitative data.

I started by gaining access to the Centre Médico-Social’s (Kpagouda’s hospital) census records from 2011. These ledgers were separated into three, corresponding to each of Kpagouda’s three “sectors,”⁸ so I counted out how many people in each sector fell into my

⁶ See list of definitions

⁷ A Gur language spoken primarily in northern Togo (Simons 2014).

⁸ Kpagouda has three sectors consisting of the area up on the “mountain,” called Kpagouda Montagne or Kpagouda Pough, the area in the plain north of the main road called Kpagouda Pleine Nord, and the area in the plain south of the main road called Kpagouda Pleine Sud. This was the current method of dividing the village as explained to me by the head of the village hospital.

target population of people from nine-25 years old. This age range was one that, based on information gathered from my qualitative interviews, represented the ages of young people who were the most likely to migrate away from the village. According to the 2011-2012 village census, there were 767 individuals who fell into this range.

I then approached the question of scope in three different ways. First I interviewed all six *chefs du quartier*⁹ and asked each of them how many young people had left his (they were all male) *quartier* in the last year and in the last five years, whether they were mostly male or female, the migrants' average age, the most common destination, and the most cited reason for leaving the village. This method proved very subject to the chief's mood and memory and did not appear to be too statistically accurate.

The second method was to interview the principals or *directeurs* of the three village primary schools and the village *complexe*¹⁰ and ask them how many students dropped out of school this past year and in the last five years, how many were boys versus girls, which of those dropouts was directly linked to migratory activity, and of those, where the migrant went.

The final method was to go "door-to-door" to a random sample (about 10%) of households in each sector of the village¹¹ and interview the heads of house about the migration history of their families by asking them how many people in their household migrated between the ages of nine-25 in the last year and in the last five years, where they went, how old they were when they first left, and why they decided to leave the village. This last method was the most painstaking, but it resulted in what seemed to be the most accurate and detailed information of the three strategies. Though the results could be further improved by a larger sample size, I learned that roughly 35% of young people ages nine-25 leave Kpagouda in search of employment every year, that Benin is the most popular destination, and that the primary motivations are to earn money for one's family and to earn one's school fees for the upcoming year.

When I returned to Togo a year and a half later in December 2013, I worked with the same translator and returned to the same village, but focused only on qualitative research and sought out specific individuals I wanted to get more information from or individuals that I had not had the chance to meet during my previous trip. This time of year coincides with the time most migrants to Nigeria return home after a year or more of labor and I was fortunate enough to be able to interview a few of those youths during my short return trip.

India

I began working in India as part of a study abroad program from January to March 2013. I focused my class fieldwork specifically on independent child migration in an attempt to collect data to compare to that of Togo. First I was partnered and began working with an NGO called Aajeevika Bureau, an NGO based in Udaipur that combines "direct service delivery, advocacy, research, and technical support in advancement of its work on issues of migrant workers" ("Vision, Mission and Approach"). I completed my research in a village about an hour outside of

⁹ Kpagouda had previously been divided into six *quartiers*, each of which had a leader. As these leaders had intimate knowledge of the families in their quarters, I sought them out to ask them about how many young people had been leaving their *quartier* of the village for work.

¹⁰ Kpagouda's combination middle and high school.

¹¹ The number of households in each sector also came from the 2011 village census.

Udaipur called Gurutaraj and in order to prepare I acquired data from the Aajeevika Bureau's most recent survey of the Malwara *panchayat*¹² and studied its migratory situation in addition to that of Kherlumber Block¹³ as a whole.

Upon arrival at Gurutaraj, my research village within Malwara *panchayat*, I got to know its layout through a process of social mapping-- a strategy by which you ask multiple people in a community, young and old, men and women, to help you "map out" the village, highlighting the location of things like schools, hospitals and other public infrastructure, water sources, different religious or ethnic groups, the homes of "important" people, main roads, market places, and whatever else they deem important. The objective is to get a sense for how life works in the community, how and where people interact, who has access to which resources, and so on. I continued by talking to as many people as possible about life in the village--who lives where, predominant castes, what people do for a living, where people generally migrate to, the quality of education, and a host of other things. I also went to the village's school and got to know the teachers and the principal. Eventually (after a few visits), I asked them about dropout rates, especially those dropouts that resulted in the employment-seeking migration of the student.

Next I went throughout the main village of Gurutaraj, its two hamlets, Tandil and Gadatalayi, and then to a neighboring village called Gundapur asking people to share with me the names of individuals they knew who had first migrated out of the state of Rajasthan before the age of 18. I asked people to limit their suggestions to migrants who had traveled outside the state because many people were involved in "up-down" migration--daily movement to more urban locations like Kherlumber and Udaipur and back--but I wanted to examine semi-permanent migration which takes a lot more forethought, is less volatile in terms of changing occupations from day to day, and would allow for interesting questions of the child's agency. I asked people to limit their suggestions to migrants who had migrated outside the state before the age of 18 in order to accurately employ the term independent *child* migrant and to establish at least a limited amount of uniformity across my interview subjects. After this process, I triangulated this information as I went along by asking people to add to, remove, or change names on the list.

I went back to the school and visited the 7/8th standard class and 9th/10th standard class, explained the work that I was doing and why, and asked the students if they had any friends or siblings who were working out of the state. This yielded a few very helpful leads as these are the grades that see the most dropouts.

After establishing a presence in the village and after I felt as if people had some semblance of trust in the fact that I am a student and not an undercover government worker, I went searching for these migrants and conducted semi-structured interviews with them. I spoke to the migrant himself if he was currently in the village or with his immediate family members if he was not. I was able to create the profiles of 18 people who had migrated at or before the age of 18. In 7 of the interviews I was able to speak to the migrant himself. In 11 I spoke to immediate relatives. Each of my profiles was of a male as no one seemed to know of a single woman who had semi-permanently migrated out of the state for employment.

I collected mostly qualitative information because I knew that I would only be in Gurutaraj for 11 days and that reliable survey data would take more time to collect. I did collect

¹² A *panchayat* is a group of several villages

¹³ A block is a group of many *panchayats*

some quantitative data, however, which allowed me to begin to explore the correlation between indicators, but my analysis is limited by my small sample size.

I collected data for each migrant on sex, caste, current age, age when he or she first migrated out of the state, their highest completed grade level, who made the decision for them to migrate, reasons for migrating, whether their parents knew they would leave, their parents' occupation and education levels, the migrant's birth order and number of siblings, and what their hopes were for the future. For each job they held outside the state I asked them to tell me the city they were in, what the occupation was, the amount of time they spend at that job, whether they had guaranteed employment there before migrating, how often they returned home, whether they had an intermediary, their salary, transportation and living expenses, remittances (amount and frequency), the methods they employed to transfer their remittances, what their families used their remittances for, job conditions overall, whether they acquired any skills, and whether there was opportunity for advancement.

When I returned to India from June to August in the summer of 2013, I worked for Aajeevika Bureau full-time as an intern. One of several projects I was assigned was a social and economic impact assessment of the Bureau's skills training institute called STEP Academy. By working at STEP Academy I was able to interview many of the young trainees who had been labor migrants before coming to the Institute, and when I went out to interview past trainees some of the Bureau's staff was gracious enough to translate for me in interviews with child migrants we met in the area. These qualitative interviews were conducted in much the same fashion as those I had done previously in January 2013.

Field Site Descriptions:

Togo

Kpagouda is a village that consists of just over 3,000 people. The majority belong to the Kabre ethnic group, but there is an incredible amount of religious diversity—with Evangelical Christians, *Croix Blanche*¹⁴, Catholics, and Muslims among them. Most people in the village are subsistence farmers, though some supplement this with income from working trades that they completed apprenticeships in such as tailoring and carpentry. Sometimes, however, this is simply not enough for some families that grow too large, that experience the death of a parent, that incur medical expenses, or encounter other misfortunes. Sometimes, people are forced to leave the village to find employment and support the family or simply out of a sense of adventure, as is the case with many young people.

Labor migration is not a new phenomenon in Togo, for it has its roots in the country's colonial history. One tentative conclusion from my first trip to Togo, however, is that the destinations of young migrants appear to be shifting from internal migration (from northern to southern Togo) to regional international migration, into Benin and Nigeria. This shift has led to many societal changes and has brought the question of child labor and child trafficking increasingly to the forefront of debate at the village, regional, and national levels.

Sustained migration patterns in Togo began during the colonial period, as early as 1910, when the Germans discovered that cash crops could not be produced easily in the more arid

¹⁴ Described to me by members of the village as a religious sect that is equal parts animist and Christian.

north. Thus, colonials essentially turned the northern territories into a labor reserve, recruiting groups like the Kabre as workers to build the colony's roads in the south and to work in the mines located there (Piot 1999, 40). Young Kabre men, often ten or twenty from each village, were transported to southern Togo where they would work for short stretches of time before returning to their home villages. By the mid-1930s, Kabre began to move into these zones in the south by their own volition, establishing scores of satellite communities to those of the North. Today more than 200,000 Kabre are currently living and farming in this region (ibid.).

Despite having moved south, these colonial-era Kabre migrants remained "intimately tied" to their ancestral villages in the north, periodically returning to sacrifice to spirits and ancestors, to attend funerals, and to initiate their children (Piot 1999). The return north of southerners is often fraught with tension--with southerners parading their newfound wealth before jealous northerners while northerners assert their ritual authority over their wealthier "children" in the south. Despite this traditional authority, the flashy new items displayed by the southerners--radios, clothes, bicycles, and occasionally cars-- result in the inescapable allure of wealth for northern Kabre.

Any kind of technology is desired and is a symbol of prestige. People notice whether your Nokia cell phone is in color or not, whether it plays music or not, and which games it has. One of the older boys living in the homestead next door to mine was fascinated with the laptop and solar panel I had brought from the States. He would help me set it up each morning and periodically check to see that all the connections were working. I once witnessed him taking apart a cell phone and charger because it wasn't working, bite and twist the frayed wires, connect them to the battery, and charge it in no time. This same young man would then promptly leave all his wires, pick up his hoe, and go cultivate an entire ¼ of a hectare with it. Such dichotomies are just a part of daily life here. Another member of my host family was as comfortable using his machete as he was playing with my iPod and kindle. It was as if he had been around touch-screen technology his whole life. After a day of cultivating in the traditional Kabre way, he'd suggest we go to the "movies" and see Avatar, Eragon, or his personal favorite, a badly dubbed Chinese Kung-Fu movie. The movies or "le video," as they call it, is simply a bar/boutique outfitted with a generator, a 19" TV, and a DVD player that plays a constant stream of pirated DVDs from 7pm-2am. Every night on the weekends and when school is out it is bursting with young people from the village watching western and Chinese movies, ordering tea and bread, and socializing. For some, this is where plans are made to leave the village to work and make money elsewhere. The decision-making involved in migrating south for work typically included one's family. It was explained to me that the planning being done at "le video" was much more secretive, indicative of plans to migrate internationally, outside of Togo and completely separate from former kinship connections and familial networks in the South.

The effects of globalization are felt even here in this tiny rural village in a country as small and as underdeveloped¹⁵ as Togo. With an increasing number of internet cafés, or "cybers," both in nearby towns like Kara and now in Kpagouda itself, young people are being exposed to the internet, to the wider world, and they crave to be a part of it. This may be a significant contributor to youth migration.

¹⁵ As of 2010, only 27.9% of the Togolese population had access to electricity and Togo's HDI value for 2012 was 0.459, in the "low human development category," placing the country at 159 out of 187 countries and territories in the world. ("Access to Electricity" 2013; Malik 2013).

With the longstanding, cyclical pattern of north-south and south to north migration so engrained in Kabre society, the possibility of a prominent shift towards migration to Benin and Nigeria instead is unsettling to many of the older generation, exciting for the younger generations, and overall of enormous importance for investigation. In researching this phenomenon during my first trip to Togo, I wanted to better understand the nature and scale of this potential shift as well as its social and economic implications, especially for independent child migrants.

Sweating and slightly out of breath from the soccer match he had just played in, the 18-year-old sat on a log, accepted a swig of my bottled water and explained to me (in a way that suggested he believed the answer to be self-evident) why young people were leaving the country for work, rather than traveling South like before. "There's no money in the South anymore," he said. His two friends and teammates agreed, "Leaving Togo is better. One can make 60,000 CFA/month (\$127 USD) in Benin but only around 30,000 CFA/month working in the South, which is really too little, even if you don't work on weekends in the South like you do in Benin." When asked about Nigeria, one replied that, "The work there is very hard, but one can return with a 'moto' to show his family and friends. One can even become a moto-taxi and earn more money once back in the village." The youngest of the three boys said that while working in the South is generally safest because one usually works for family, working in Benin, and Nigeria especially, is simply more profitable and affords one more prestige-- "[when you migrate outside of Togo] you have seen more of the world and might even be able to speak another language! Others come to respect you."

Benin and Nigeria have become the main destinations for young migrant laborers from northern Togo. In fact, in my very first casual conversation about youth labor migration with young people in the Kpagouda, including neighbors of mine, they did not even mention southern Togo as a popular place to make money outside the village. Upon further research, the economic argument did make sense, as Togo has the lowest GDP per capita of the three countries at a mere \$1,100 USD¹⁶, but it was still surprising to me, given what I thought I knew and understood about the importance of the relationship between northern and southern Togolese, that this pattern would shift significantly (Piot 1999, 40). My young informants had a lot to say about these "new" destinations and the differences between working in each.

First they explained a pervasive stereotype about the *kinds* of young people who go to each place, saying that youth who "don't do anything" (those who have dropped out of school) go to Nigeria, while "students" go to Benin. When I asked for clarification on the distinction, wondering Two young cultivators in Kpagouda shortly before they left to why that was so, they explained that Nigeria is further work in Benin for the summer away than Benin, and that the journey to Nigeria is longer, more arduous, and more expensive, typically requiring the help, knowledge, and connections of an intermediary, or *waga*, and these *wagas* typically only make contracts¹⁷ for a minimum nine months. As such, if a school-aged teen wants to make money in

¹⁶ CIA World Factbook, 2012 est. Benin's GDP/capita was reported as \$1,700 USD and Nigeria's was \$2,700 US.

¹⁷ Agreements made with *wagas* are oral contracts and typically delineate how long a migrant will work for and what form his or her payment will take (be it a motorcycle, a sound system, tin for roofs, a certain amount of money, etc). As explained in this section, compensation for work in Nigeria, especially for boys, is typically in the

Nigeria, he or she has to have about a year to spend there and thus can no longer attend classes back home. On the other hand, my interviewees explained that one could travel to and work in Benin for as little as two weeks and come back. This flexibility is what makes Benin such a popular destination for students who want to *faire la rentrée*, which is typically done over their summer holidays.

Wagas are typically responsible for the migrant's transportation to the place where he or she will work, for securing that employment, and for collecting and transferring payment to the migrant from the employer when their contracted amount of time is up. *Wagas* can merely be good friends who "know the way" and who have been to Benin or Nigeria one or a few times before, or they can be recruiters, in a sense, on behalf of employers in Benin or Nigeria.

As I was finishing up my interviews at the end of the two months, a trend concerning *wagas* became very clear to me. The more personally a migrant knew his or her *waga*, the less likely they were to be cheated or led into harm's way. Those youth who were wooed, if you will, by an unfamiliar *waga* who came into Kpagouda with his motorcycle and nice clothes, met them at *le video* and told them he could help them get anything they wanted if they left in secret to work with him abroad, were typically those whose *waga* led them to exploitative employers and ended up disappearing and pocketing the rewards that they were due. It is not unheard of, for young men especially, to go a year or sometimes more working tirelessly for a *waga* and an employer, only to be told at the conclusion of his contract that there will be no payment. With no bargaining power, there is little a migrant can do in this situation other than find a way to return home empty-handed. Those youth who left for Benin and Nigeria with a friend who had been there before typically ended up working for employers who were known to be kind and fair and they usually had good experiences.

Given all the uncertainty, the potential for exploitation, and risk of coming back empty-handed, why do these young men and women continue to leave their village-- one of subsistence, but not extreme poverty-- to work in Benin and Nigeria? Obviously, each migrant has his or her own story, his or her own motivation for embarking on this particular journey (sometimes many times over), but there are a few very common rationalizations.

The two reasons that I heard most often expressed by the migrants themselves were related to family and to education. Often a parent falls ill, and in a society where polygamy is waning, but still present, meaning each family has many mouths to feed, this results in the older children having to grow up prematurely and provide for their families. As there are very few employment opportunities for youth near the village, they are forced to travel abroad where there is rumored to be money waiting. *Wagas* who recruit young labor often target families in these dire situations, for they are hard-pressed to decline the promise of a job and a "quick" end to their financial insecurity.

The second most common narrative was related to the inadequacies of the rural education system. Large classrooms and a lack of teachers makes for a tough learning environment for anyone, especially kids who do not have enough petrol to do their homework at night, who might not have enough to eat, or who must farm and do other laborious chores when they return from school each day. This leads many to fail their exams and after a while they get discouraged, or their parents decide it's not worth their money to send that child to

form of *things* and not cash. These contracts are most typically associated with *wagas* who take one to Nigeria, not Benin, and last for nine months, one year, or two years.

school anymore (especially if it is a girl). In fact, school fees rose in 1998 and all students were suddenly responsible for buying their uniforms, shoes, notebooks, pens, and so on. Indeed, an interview with a schoolteacher revealed that secondary school students in Kpagouda must pay 10,000 CFA/year (\$21 USD) and roughly 5,000 CFA in addition to that for books and other supplies. Those children whose families cannot afford the fees must either migrate for a short time to earn next year's fees, or ultimately drop out. Many older siblings end up migrating to support their younger siblings' continued education through their remittances. A child who drops out of school might decide that he or she wants to do an apprenticeship to be a seamstress, carpenter, or a number of other things which can lead to a good future, but it can cost exorbitant amounts of money to finance this training which often lasts several years and is unpaid even though the youth is working for his or her instructor.

India

Unlike in Togo, the bulk of independent child migration in India is still internal rather than international. This makes sense if one considers not only how much larger it is than Togo, but also how diverse the regions within India are, not just in terms of people, but in terms of dominant industries and breadth of economic opportunities. Uneven economic growth and development between rural areas and urban centers in India has placed the spotlight on this substantial and growing incidence of internal migration, where research was previously focused on "brain drain" effect of the international migration of middle to upper-class youth. In December 2011, UNESCO and UNICEF held a National Workshop on Internal Migration and Human Development in India, which brought to light many of the issues facing internal migrants. Among these are a lack of access to government services such as subsidized healthcare, shelter, and food at destination, political disenfranchisement, and a lack of legal protection, especially concerning the payment of fair wages and the provision of safe working conditions.

These challenges facing internal migrants are seen across many different economic sectors. Prior to arriving in Udaipur, I did a literature review specifically focused on the construction sector--the largest employer of migrant labor in India, with 40 million migrant construction workers estimated in 2008-- and learned through one report that in addition to many of the aforementioned issues, the construction sector employs vast numbers of laborers who are under the legal working age of 18 (Deshingkar and Akter 2009).

In my first month in India I got the chance to explore this for myself during my "Urban inquiry" assignment for my Development and Poverty Reduction class. I visited several construction sites and met many young migrants including the two boys, 11 and 15 years old,. They had migrated from a peripheral village to Udaipur and were living in the city on their own in a room they rented. Several others I met were living on the construction site itself.

Unfortunately, my co-researcher and I were not able to speak to them for very long as we did not want to create conflict between them and their supervisors, who know all too well that employing underage workers is illegal and are afraid of being reported. However, I still hoped to find out whether this phenomenon of independent child migration was truly as "rare" as I had been told. What kind of situation and decision-making process brought these two boys here? What kinds of situations take other young migrants to other urban centers? What is their motivation and what are their hopes for the future? For the next month I traveled back and

forth to a village in Malwara *panchayat*, about 80 km south of Udaipur city and a “sending region” for migrants, to explore these questions further.

In this study I wanted to look specifically at internal migration for employment or in search of employment and as such, the rural to urban migration stream (which the census has found to be increasing) became my focus. This stream is also male-dominant, though there has been a growing trend in women’s associational migration --migration due to movement of parents or earning members—in addition to the short-term migration of women to nearby urban centers for labor, as is seen in the Kherlumbar block where I conducted the bulk of my field research.

Kherlumbar block is part of the Malwara *Panchayat*, where 317 out of 780 households (40.64%) reported migrating members (*Migration Profile* 2008). All in all, out of the *panchayats* that were surveyed by Aajeevika in Kherlumbar Block, Malwara had one of the lowest numbers of households reporting migration, which shows how pervasive labor migration is in the area. Disaggregated data for Gurutaraj and other specific villages in Malwara were not available to me at the time of writing this report.

Gurutaraj, the specific village I spent most of my time in, has about 300 households and is separated into Gurutaraj-Majawat (comprised of mostly Rajputs , 1 Brahman family, and a handful of Muslim families) and Gurutaraj-Tavran (comprised almost entirely of tribals from the Meena tribe, with 1-2 Rajput families). Gurutaraj also contains two hamlets, Gada and Gurutalayi, each of which have 80-100 households, which are also comprised entirely of Meenas, a more specific tribal group. Gurutaraj has very few government facilities, but it does have a school for grades 1-10 in addition to an *anganwadi* or daycare. Only one of its hamlets, Gada, has a primary school. Kagra, another smaller village 2 km away from Gurutaraj and predominantly made up of Meenas, also has a primary school.

In terms of migration, migration outside the state from this area is not a recent phenomenon, but migrating for wage labor and unskilled work is. Seventy-eight percent of migrants migrate outside Rajasthan and of the 78%, 53% migrate to Ahmedabad. These migrants are comprised of mostly ST and OBC and do predominantly hotel and construction work. Forty-one percent migrate to Mumbai. These are mostly OBC, and mostly entrepreneurs, shops keepers or helpers, and hotel workers. Just over 4% migrate to Bangalore. These are mostly ST and work with stone fitting and polishing. Further, 36% of households report migration as the primary source of household income and 45% of families has at least one member migrating. The most popular occupations are hotel and construction work, providing a livelihood to almost 25% of total migrants each, followed by scrap work, driving, and shop-keeping. Finally, migrating youth typically drop out of the formal education system around 8th to 10th standard.

A Look Ahead

In Chapter 1 I will introduce the dominant international policies that have a bearing on child migration and discuss how normative conceptualizations of “the child” and of “labor” have been very influential in how these are written, understood, and implemented. I will also highlight how U.S. and international anti-TIP agendas and the fear of the repercussions of non-compliance have been instrumental in getting the aforementioned laws ratified by a majority of countries, even if they do not reflect local understandings of the issues involved. In Chapter 2 I

will explain how the high-profile visibility of egregious cases of child trafficking and child labor has dwarfed the scarce research that has been done on independent child migrants. I will then deconstruct the term “independent” and explore the question of child agency and its constraints, drawing from specific cases of child migrants in Togo and India. I will also position these cases against the international laws discussed in Chapter 1 and show how they reflect an inadequate understanding of the real lives of many child migrants. Finally, in Chapter 3, I will highlight common government, non-government, and local interventions and their limitations. I will then examine how policy and ethnography can be paired to produce more nuanced and effective policy, culminating in suggestions for further research.

Chapter 1: International Policies and Normative Conceptualizations of Childhood

1.1 International Policy environment

To fully understand child migration and its complexities, it is crucial to first situate it within the international policy environment in which it exists. In this chapter I will introduce three widely ratified international conventions on children and their rights, child labor, and human trafficking, respectively, and show how they assume a universal understanding of childhood and labor while actually reflecting normative, Western perceptions of these concepts. I will then explain how influential forces like the U.S. Trafficking in Persons (TIP) have come to bear on countries' decisions to nevertheless adopt these laws and how parallel pressures have affected the overall approaches and policy responses of non-governmental and other local organizations to the issues of child labor and child trafficking. Finally, I will comment on how certain child advocacy organizations, in response to funding politics and "compassion fatigue," have adopted sensationalist language and highlighted the extreme or most "pitiable" cases and on what that has meant for independent child migrants.

The Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)

In 1989 the world turned its attention to the status of children everywhere with the advent of the United Nations' Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The convention, combined with the increase in global communication which "brought daily reminders of children's suffering around the world," created a "sense of urgency" not just for international agencies and children's rights groups, but in for scholars as well (Bluebond-Langner and Korbin 2007, 241). New policies and approaches to children's lives, major humanitarian relief and increased philanthropy began to target problems specifically affecting children—everything from biological factors, such as disease, to social factors, such as poverty (ibid.). Attention to the global problems of children "raised the visibility of children and childhoods" (Bluebond-Langner and Korbin 2007, 241). The emerging anthropology of children and childhoods "began to look at children as a microcosm of concerns facing contemporary societies and an increasingly global world" (242). This increasingly global world is one that saw a staggering increase in human migration, which would later bring human (and thus child) trafficking to the fore (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2006).

Echoing the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the basic premise of the CRC is that children—defined as all persons below the age of 18—are born with the fundamental freedoms and inherent rights of all human beings ("Guide to Non-discrimination and the CRC" 2009). Among these are the right to survival; to develop to the fullest; to protection from harmful influences, abuse and exploitation; and to participate fully in family, cultural and social life ("Convention on the Rights of the Child" 2003). The CRC especially emphasizes that actions taken concerning children should keep their "best interests" as the primary concern

(Whitehead 2007). United Nations International Emergency Children's Fund (UNICEF), which is guided in its mission by the provisions and principles of the CRC, describes the convention as, "A universally agreed set of non-negotiable standards and obligations...they are minimum entitlements and freedoms that should be respected by all governments ("Convention on the Rights of the Child" 2014). Currently 193 countries have ratified the convention. These 193 countries include every member of the United Nations except Somalia (which in November 2013 announced that it would do so) and the United States (which has no current plans to ratify the CRC, citing unconstitutionality) ("Convention on the Rights of the Child" 2003). To be considered compliant, each government must also report back to the UN on the progress of children's rights in their country. As a result, many governments have enacted their own national legislation to ensure the protection and realization of the rights of children.

The phrase "best interest of the child" is used over nine times in the CRC in seven separate articles without any further explanation as to what this stipulation should look like in the process of implementation. The majority of the time the phrase appears, the CRC reads simply, "The best interests of the child will be the basic concern" ("Convention on the Rights of the Child" 2003). What exactly is in the child's "best interest" and how might it be determined? By whom? While the CRC, rather uniquely, "recognizes that children are holders of rights and capable actors in their own respect, it also sees childhood as a phase in which the girl or boy is still evolving physically, mentally and emotionally," thus requiring special measures to protect and promote their development (Lansdown 2005). For a piece of legislation that is meant to secure the rights of children, the idea that the "best interest" of the child is something that adults are to determine means that it remains highly adult-centric. The CRC clearly operates under the assumption that though individuals under the age of 18 have the right to articulate their own interests, they are not typically able to, and since this is the case, it outlines the concepts adults should consider when they make decisions on their behalf.

The Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (WFCLC)

The next significant piece of international legislation, drafted in 1999, was the International Labor Organization's (ILO) Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (WFCLC), or the "Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor." This piece of legislation, which, like the CRC, defines a child as any person under the age of 18, is listed as one of ILO's eight "Fundamental Conventions." The WFCLC bans four categories of child labor that "no government should tolerate" (C182 - Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention). The first is "modern slavery, debt bondage, and similar practices, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict." The second is "sex work, including pornography and prostitution." Third is "illicit activities-- in particular drug trafficking," and the last is defined, quite broadly, as "any other work that by its nature is likely to harm the health, safety, and morals of children" (Dennis 1999, 944-946).

The preamble of the WFCLC recognizes "that child labor is to a great extent caused by poverty and that the long-term solution lies in sustained economic growth leading to social

progress, in particular poverty alleviation and universal education...” (C182 - Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention). Given the number of times poverty and the inadequacy of education or lack of educational opportunities were cited as reasons for child labor migration in my fieldwork, it is heartening that policymakers were keeping this reality in mind. However, the actual body of the WFCLC is again too vague in revisiting the issues of poverty and education:

<p style="text-align: center;"><i>1999 Worst Forms of Child Labor Convention</i></p> <p style="text-align: center;"><i>Article 7</i></p> <hr/> <p>1. Each Member shall take all necessary measures to ensure the effective implementation and enforcement of the provisions giving effect to this Convention including the provision and application of penal sanctions or, as appropriate, other sanctions.</p> <p>2. Each Member shall, taking into account the importance of education in eliminating child labour, take effective and time-bound measures to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ (a) prevent the engagement of children in the worst forms of child labour;▪ (b) provide the necessary and appropriate direct assistance for the removal of children from the worst forms of child labour and for their rehabilitation and social integration;▪ (c) ensure access to free basic education, and, wherever possible and appropriate, vocational training, for all children removed from the worst forms of child labour;▪ (d) identify and reach out to children at special risk; and▪ (e) take account of the special situation of girls. <p>3. Each Member shall designate the competent authority responsible for the implementation of the provisions giving effect to this Convention.</p>

Box 1

Source: C182 - Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention

Based on the subtitle of the Convention, “The Convention concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labor,” one would expect it to address not just the treatment of child labor, but its prevention as well. There is room for analysis at the source of the phenomenon of child labor and child labor migration, but the WFCLC falls short. As previously mentioned, it lists many types of work and other economic activities that children should not be involved in and in letters b and c shown above Article 7 offers many recommendations for what to do with children who are “rescued” from their

employers. Even so, the only mention of prevention is in letter a where the WFCLC merely states that national governments should prevent the worst forms of child labor, but not how. Letters d and e are especially vague.

Overall the WFCLC offers far too little support to national governments in the implementation of its lofty standards and almost completely disregards the idea of *preventing* child labor. Couple this lack of direction with the fact that many of the nations that are plagued with rampant child labor do not have the resources to address it even if they did have a promising plan of action, and it is no wonder the last 14 years have seen so little progress (*Measures to Combat Trafficking* 2006). Much of this ambiguity can be attributed to compromises that must be made in order to acquire a sufficient number of signatories, but it leaves the Convention with no “teeth,” if you will (Pupavac 2002). At most, countries will put energy and resources into raids of employers and repatriation of child laborers, but, as I will discuss in Chapter 3, this strategy is ineffective when it comes to child labor migrants.

The Palermo Protocol

Perhaps the most frequently cited piece of legislation pertaining to the human trafficking debate is the UN’s Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children, also known as the Palermo Protocol (though it is actually one of several Palermo Protocols). It was adopted by the General Assembly in 2000. Entering into force in 2003, the Protocol became the first international, legally-binding piece of legislation with an “explicit” and “agreed upon” definition of trafficking in persons (TIP). The purpose of a universal definition was to facilitate cooperation and consistency in the approaches of different national governments in combating TIP (“United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime” 2013). As of October 2013, 147 countries have ratified and signed the Protocol. Even so, according to United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the office responsible for implementing the Protocol, “very few criminals are being brought to justice and most victims are never identified or assisted” (“The Blue Heart Campaign” 2012). The wording of this “explicit” definition of trafficking is as follows:

*2000 Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially
Women and Children*

Article 3

For the purposes of this Protocol:

(a) "Trafficking in persons" shall mean the recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of persons, by means of the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, of abduction, of fraud, of deception, of the abuse of power or of a position of vulnerability or of the giving or receiving of payments or benefits to achieve the consent of a person having control over another person, for the purpose of exploitation. Exploitation shall include, at a minimum, the exploitation of the prostitution of others or other forms of sexual exploitation, forced labour or services, slavery or practices similar to slavery, servitude or the removal of organs;

(b) The consent of a victim of trafficking in persons to the intended exploitation set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article shall be irrelevant where any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) have been used;

(c) The recruitment, transportation, transfer, harbouring or receipt of a child for the purpose of exploitation shall be considered "trafficking in persons" even if this does not involve any of the means set forth in subparagraph (a) of this article;

(d) "Child" shall mean any person under eighteen years of age.

Box 2

Source: "United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime 2013

The Palermo Protocol's definition of TIP has been heavily criticised by a number of academics for being vague and affording the term "trafficking" enormous (and unhelpful) elasticity (Davidson 2011). Davidson O'Connell, a professor of sociology at the University of Nottingham says of the Protocol, "'Trafficking' is thus described as a process (recruitment, transportation and control) that can be organized in a variety of different ways, involve different types and degrees of compulsion (all of which are undefined – what kind of threats? How much deception? Which types of vulnerability?), and lead to a variety of very different outcomes" (Anderson and Davidson 2003). When read carefully, it becomes apparent that the entire definition hinges on the word "exploitation" which itself is not defined. What degree of exploitation? Could this simply be poor working conditions or unfair pay (realities of the informal economy in developing countries, even for adults)? If so, the more important question is, what if the child consents to the "exploitation"?

Article 3 of the protocol makes it explicit that in the case of those under the age of eighteen the issue of consent is irrelevant if their movement is considered to be for the purposes of exploitation. Thorsen and Hashim in *Child Migration in Africa* maintain that "the implication is that those under the age of 18 are incapable of exercising meaningful choice, in the process inextricably linking the status of the 'child' with that of 'victim' or 'potential victim'"

(Hashim and Thorsen 2011, 17). Indeed, “the very possibility that children might be capable of exercising choice about whether or not to move is rejected in many perspectives, including in legal instruments like the Palermo Protocol” (ibid.).

By this logic, a 17-year-old male from Rajasthan, India who asks his older brother to take him to Surat with him to work in the saree-cutting industry is a “trafficked child” if he happens to be paid unfairly or if other forms of “exploitation” (again, we do not know how severe the exploitation has to be) befall him at destination. Bad conditions are highly likely considering that they are unskilled laborers with little education and will only have access to informal sector jobs that lack regulation as far as salary and other securities¹⁸. It does not matter that this young man consented to this relocation for employment. Further, his brother would be considered a “trafficker of children” and could be punished as such, even if none of the means from subparagraph (a) are employed. One can clearly see how independent child migrants can easily be mislabelled as “victims of trafficking.”

Interestingly enough, however, if these two brothers had crossed national boundaries rather than state lines, they might be considered illegal immigrants and the older brother, a smuggler. In a separate section, the protocol distinguishes between smuggling and trafficking. Smuggling refers to the movement of individuals where the individual has consented, while trafficking involves the threat or use of force or other forms of coercion, abduction, fraud deception or other abuse of power (Hashim and Thorsen 2011, 17). It should give us pause that merely changing the destination can transform a victim of trafficking to a criminal illegal immigrant. In one scenario, agency is overlooked and the “victim’s” voice is further silenced due to the irrelevance of consent. The solution might be “rescue” and repatriation, which would be an inconvenience to the child migrant as he would have lost money in transportation costs and would be back to square one without employment. In the next scenario, agency is criminalized (Ensor and Goździak 2010, 2), and the solution might be a prison sentence. In both scenarios, the child migrant is marginalized and this defeats the purpose of helping children in the first place. By interdicting this movement of youth under 18 years of age, we have made their (many argue, inevitable) labor migration more dangerous because they must evade detection by law enforcement agencies, and also less profitable.

Overall, these and numerous other international statutes¹⁹ that provide the framework for the protection of children are not superfluous. In cases where children are kidnapped,

¹⁸ Child labor tends to be mostly in the informal sector, but this is especially true when there is high adult unemployment in the formal sector, as is the case in Mozambique. According to a 2003 study there, 50% of adults were unemployed in the formal sector and one-third of children between the ages of 10 and 14 were economically active, primarily in agricultural sectors including family farms. It is very rare for children to be used as laborers in the formal industrial sector (Embassy Maputo 2006, 06MAPUTO1324).

¹⁹ Other instruments influencing the overall framework of protection for migrant children include, among others, The International Convention on the Protection of all Migrant Workers and their Families; ILO Convention 143 on Migrant Workers (Supplementary Provisions) of 1975; the Hague Conventions, including the Convention of the Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect to Intercountry Adoption; the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness; and the Protocol Against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air.

abused, or exploited, there must be legal instruments with which to convict perpetrators and violators of children's rights. However, as I have highlighted, these laws too vague to support most attempts at implementation. The normative (and Western) frameworks of labor and of childhood on which these laws are predicated have meant that they were formed without a complete picture of the reality of children at the local level, a reality that includes the possibility of independent child migrants, youth under the age of 18 that actively negotiate their economic options and decide to relocate for the purpose of employment.

1.2 Prevailing Notions of the "Child"

The success of these Conventions in securing ratification by a vast majority of the world's nations does not mean that the leaders, much less the citizens, of these countries share a universal understanding of children's rights, of trafficking, of what constitutes a "worst form" of child labor, or even what constitutes a "child".

All of the main legal instruments that govern the topics of child labor and child trafficking at the international level employ a seemingly universal age of adulthood, also known as the "age of majority," or one's "legal age." In the United States, this age is defined as "the age at which a person is recognized by law to be an adult, capable of managing his or her own affairs and responsible for any legal obligations created by his or her actions" (*West's Encyclopedia of American Law* 1998, 126). In most U.S. states, and in a majority of foreign countries (see *Figure 1*) the age of majority is 18, but it also varies to an extent depending on the nature of the activity in which the person is engaged—drinking, driving, voting, marriage, consensual sex, military involvement, and so on (*ibid.*).

Worldwide age of Majority

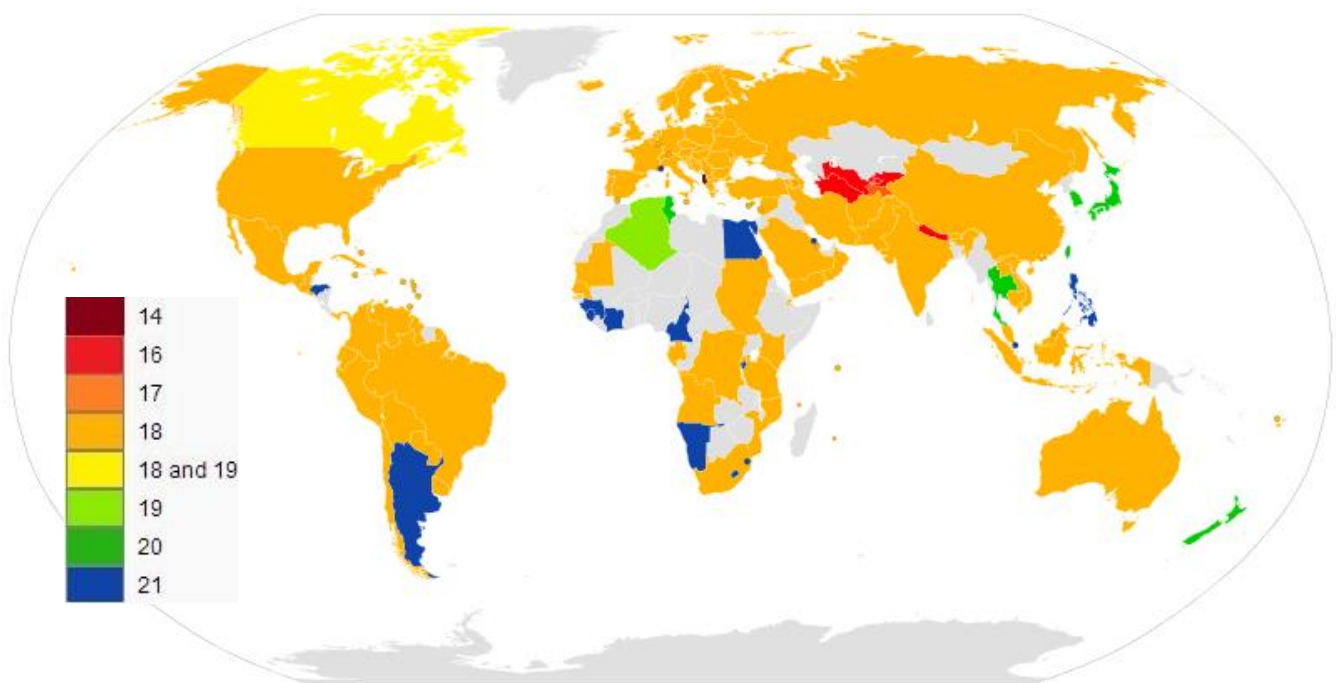


Figure 1

Source: (Kinnear 2007)

Why eighteen? One might hypothesize that this standard stems from scientific evidence of cognitive development, or perhaps historical precedent. However, recent scientific evidence suggests that our brains do not finish developing until our mid-twenties and that perhaps 25 is “the new cut-off point of adulthood” (Wallis 2013). On the opposite end, according to Roman law established in A.D. 529, children were “freed from guardianship” when they reached puberty, which was defined for males as occurring at 14 years of age, and 12 years old for girls (Frier 2004, 23). As one might expect, “Roman Law influenced people within the Empire and the age of fourteen may have been generally accepted, as a result, as the age of maturity” (James 1960, 25). By other accounts, in northern Europe, fifteen seems to have been the age of majority, relating to when the “pupil” had both the understanding and judgment to act and make decisions, particularly in regards to property law (25). The “childhood” of the nobles in France ended at seventeen “because they were then judged strong enough and sufficiently qualified for the culture of their lands and commerce” (22). In England the age of majority was fifteen until the Magna Carta in 1215, at which point it was raised to twenty-one; the raising of the age “has been attributed to various causes, including the increase in the weight of arms” (26).

Thus, the age at which a child becomes an adult is not “universal,” but culturally and historically specific. After all, a person may be biologically an adult and behave as such, but still be treated as a child if they are under the legal age of majority in a certain legal jurisdiction. Conversely, one may legally be an adult but possess none of the maturity or responsibility that defines the character of an adult. Even though most countries in the world set the age of majority at 18, this varies from a low of 14 (Albania) to a high of 21 (Argentina, Namibia, Lesotho, Egypt, and others) (Kinnear 2007, 90-93). The fact that the age of majority officially varies by up to seven years “shows that this issue is not just about the age a child becomes competent to perform certain legal acts, but also about when a person is considered mature enough to be viewed as an adult according to the cultures of various countries” (Coomer and Hubbard 2009, 105). The following case of Namibia shows that this is also a socioeconomic issue—kids in economic hardship seem to have to grow up faster.

Policy makers in Namibia, one of the first countries to ratify the CRC, had to think critically about what it meant to “harmonize” its laws of majority to coincide with Article 1 of the CRC. They reasoned that:

The trend towards setting the age of majority at 18 is partly a result of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention does not absolutely require that State Parties lower ages of majority which are higher than 18. Even so, the Committee which monitors the Convention has encouraged countries to harmonize the definition of the child and has recently criticized several countries for having an age of majority which is different than 18. The main motivation for harmonizing the ages is apparently to ensure that children do not lose any of their special legal protections before they acquire complete adult rights” (Coomer and Hubbard 2009, 105-106).

Indeed, the Youth Social Policy and Development Division of the UN states that “Article 1 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child defines ‘children’ as persons up to the age of 18. This was intentional, as it was hoped that the Convention would provide protection and rights to as large an age-group as possible and because there was no similar United Nations Convention on the Rights of Youth” (“Youth- FAQ”).

In considering lowering the age of majority from 21 to 18 to comply with the CRC, Namibian officials sought input from members of the public, including youth, service providers and other key stakeholders “to ensure that the law would be suitable for Namibia and feasible to implement in practice” (Coomer and Hubbard 2009,104). Many youth responded that they would not be able to handle the added responsibilities of adulthood until they were older anyway, so 21 was an acceptable measure, but the curious thing was that all of those respondents were university students from middle-class or upper-middle class families. One 16 year old’s response reminded me more of the child migrants I interviewed in my fieldwork. She stated, “I think people should be permitted the right to work at any type of job they want at 16. My mom is a domestic worker. I have passed my first term [of Grade 12], but do not have any money for tertiary education. Imagine the crisis I’m in. I’ve looked for jobs everywhere to support my further education. But they have all turned me down because of my age” (Coomer and Hubbard 2009, 115). Children are born into different circumstances and policy should account for these differences.

Historically children ceased to be children at younger ages. It should not be so surprising that a minor would be capable of earning a living, or consenting to relocating in order to do so below age 18. Further, different cultures have different coming-of-age traditions. In Jewish tradition, the transition to adulthood is celebrated at 13 years of age for boys and 12 years of age for girls, while in many parts of Latin America, girls become women at age 15 in a ceremony called a *quinceñera*. In India, according to Sudhir Kakar, an analyst in the field of cultural psychology, children enter the last “stage” of childhood, the *kumara*, at ages 5-7 and cease to be children at ages 8-12 (Kakar 1979, 28). The age cutoffs of each stage of childhood according to Kakar, are actually age ranges, allowing for different lived experiences and development among individuals.

In Togo, in order to determine who is considered a child or non-adult, I asked many of my interviewees “who in Togolese culture as a whole, and in this village specifically is considered an adult?” Théo, the head of an NGO called Action Humanitaire pour les Enfants en Difficulté (AHED), which works to help underprivileged children in various ways gave a particularly interesting answer. He responded saying, “anyone who can put food on the table, anyone who has gone through ceremonial initiation²⁰, anyone who is completing an apprenticeship, and anyone who is pregnant or has impregnated someone is considered grown, an adult.” This would indicate that in Togo, and perhaps in many developing countries, an adult

²⁰ These initiations occur every 5 years, so young men and women might be of varying ages. Usually around puberty (about age 15) or slightly after

is not someone who has reached a certain age, but rather someone who has done adult-like things. His definition is active rather than passive, indicating that in many places, maturity is a process, not an achievement. Since child migration occurs in areas of high adult out-migration, migration itself is considered adult-like and can be thought of as a way to come of age or transition into adulthood (Ensor and Goździak 2010, 1).

A universalized view of the child “based on Western assumptions about children’s best interests and a single standard of age (18 and under) is antithetical to most anthropological thinking” for anthropologists typically advocate for the confrontation of “the messiness and untidiness of social reality” in lieu of its reduction (Bluebond-Langner and Korbin 2007, 244-245). The definitions of childhood found in international statutes are “bright lines” of age and are considered “problematic considering the variation by culture, ethnicity, gender, history and location found in the cross-cultural record” (242). Anthropological studies have even gone so far as to question models or approaches that assume a universal progression from childhood through adulthood, from incompetency to competency, and from immaturity to maturity” (242). According to such theorists, children are “not only acted on by adults but also agents of political change and cultural interpretation. Children are at once developing beings, in possession of agency, and to varying degrees vulnerable” (242). This view, however, presents a policy dilemma. What happens when we “move away from a view of children as passive recipients of action and ascribe them agency and competency, or even when we shift weight to agency and away from children as developing beings in need of protection? What happens to vulnerability? How do we deal with our ethical and moral responsibilities to children and to others in the communities in which they live?” (243). Moreover, how do we design policy that will protect children from harm, but will not undermine the agency of children who already have so few options?

In conclusion, the concept of childhood as a definitive phase of life which extends to age 18 is not just ethnocentric--lacking a basis in both science and history—but detrimental to many independent child migrants. In the name of “harmonizing” legal instruments relating to children and their rights, this standard may have further victimized youth who are seeking better economic outcomes. The agency, the power to choose, of those under 18 is discounted, so their voices are not heard and their needs are not met. Further, the resources these minors might turn to for help have an incentive to reject them because of these laws. For example, NGOs that seek to help migrant laborers may turn them away and deny them their services because they do not want to be seen as enabling child trafficking or child labor²¹. The child is left without legal aid, health services, counseling, skills-training, and a number of other things that would improve his or her economic outcomes and overall migratory experience. Apart from the denial of key support services, these young migrants now have to find more covert ways of migrating—evading border authorities and—if an older brother or acquaintance is not willing to

²¹ I present an example of this from the NGO I worked with in India in Section 1.4 “Parallel Pressures on Local Actors”

risk transporting a minor—seeking out intermediaries that are perhaps not known to them and do not have their best interests in mind.

1.3 Children and Labor

In addition to questioning normative views about children and the standard of 18 years as the age of majority, it is also important to consider what is meant by “labor.” What constitutes labor or work? Who in the family should provide? What kind of economic activities are appropriate for a child to engage in, if any? Which of these activities constitute chores or “child work²²” versus “child labor,” which has a more negative connotation?

If young people, say, ages 12-17 in communities such as the ones I studied are already considered adult or adult-like in their communities, even younger children, as young as 6 and 7, are sometimes expected to assist with numerous household tasks, some perhaps more strenuous than anything a parent in the West would deem appropriate. In a study of fisherman on the coast of Andhra Pradesh, in India, boys as young as 12 would accompany their father out to fish, girls as young as 10 would cook with their mothers, and children as young as five would collect firewood (Dube 1981). In my travels I have seen 7 and 8 year olds farming alongside their older siblings or parents out in the fields, transporting fairly heavy loads of produce or water, and caring for younger siblings. None of these tasks are considered “child labor”; they are a reality of everyday life, seen as no different from the chores some children in the West are expected to complete such as washing dishware, taking out the garbage, or cleaning the home. The “global model of childhood” (Ansell 2005, 23) is really that of a white bourgeoisie child who gets to play. Any chores the child might have are seen as tasks that build character and foster a sense of responsibility, definitely not “child labor” in the negative sense. In fact, it can be concluded almost universally that “not all work is bad for children”; many see it as a welcome opportunity and a rite of passage into adulthood (Fyfe 1989; cited in Chandra 2008, 4).

Although it is not possible to generalize about all Westerners, some may see that their children have the luxury of playtime, compare this to prevalent child labor in low-income countries, and deem the parents of those children backwards and irresponsible. What this obscures are both the structural barriers in place that do not allow for the attainment of that free time and the fact that many Western children *are* laboring, in a sense, due to the pressure of getting the best grades and getting into the best universities, or due to the school to prison pipeline which, in the United States disproportionately affects African American and Latino children. Indeed, children in the United States are legally allowed to work as young as age 15 with a work permit, and are allowed to work full-time at age 16, the cutoff age of compulsory education. Children even younger than 15 often babysit or receive income in exchange for work in other capacities. Ultimately, the economic options available to children in high-income

²² The term ‘child work’ has typically been used for acceptable forms of work, while the term ‘child labor’ denotes exploitative and unsuitable forms of work (Chandra 2008, 3-4).

countries—babysitting, lifeguarding, working in restaurants, etc—are simply not available to children (or adults) in the communities I studied. Does this mean that the work that *is* available to them—farming, domestic work, factory work, hawking, hotel/restaurant work, etc—is inherently bad? Perhaps not. Perhaps these things would not fall under the jurisdiction of the WFCLC, but again, “exploitation” is not clearly enough defined to include only the truly victimized and not all children who get paid too little or are treated poorly by their employers.

The prevailing emphasis on children’s dependency and the language of victimization in policy contradicts the reality of many children’s lives, including many of those I had the privilege to interview in my time abroad. Further, it ignores the children’s role as producers in some family situations, “therefore [placing] working children on the margins of what is perceived as proper childhood, despite the necessity or normality of their contribution to family activities” in these cultures (Ansell 2005, 230; Boyden 2001; Punch 2001, 805; Robson 2004, 241; cited in Hashim and Thorsen 2011, 5). What is hidden by these policies meant to “save” the children of the third world is that children were not always separate from economic activity, even in the West. Children were actively eliminated from the production process at a particular moment in history.

Historically, the concept of ‘the child’ in the West developed during the 19th and 20th century (Aries 1962). The social constructionist view explains how children became progressively separated from the adult social world, particularly in the area of ‘work’ and ‘labor’ (Aries 1962; Archer 1988; cited in Chandra 2008, 2). Legislative provisions were introduced to prohibit children from working in factories during this period and the compulsory education system on a national level placed children in schools (Fyfe 1989; Weiner 1991; cited in Chandra 2008, 2). Thus, participation in formal waged work was removed from children’s lives. The exclusion of children from the world of productive work “resulted in development of an image of children as unproductive and, therefore, dependent on others for their well-being” (Chandra 2008, 3). Consequently, “considerations of the meaning of work for children themselves have been largely excluded from debate” (ibid.), replaced by “attempts to map and quantify children’s work [that come] from agencies intent on its reduction, control or elimination” such as the International Labour Organization (ILO) and UNICEF which campaign against abusive and exploitative forms of child labour and have developed a distinction between suitable and unsuitable work for children (James et al. 1998, 123).

Roy Huijsmans and Simon Baker, faculty at the International Institute of Social Studies in the Netherlands, ask a relevant question—“if the human trafficking and child labor discourse appears to contain a series of problems, and may even make matters worse for young migrants by criminalizing their employment, why then does it continue to receive widespread support? (Huijsmans and Baker 2012, 928)” There are two main reasons why countries who do not completely agree with these provisions might have nevertheless ratified these Conventions; in the next section I turn to economics and international politics.

1.4 “Universal” Legal Standards or Response to Economic Pressure?

The first reason has to do with a nation’s image in the international community. Children’s rights as set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child are “held to be universal and are underpinned by the principles of non-discrimination and the best interests of the child. Commitment to promoting and protecting children’s rights is widely taken as a mark of civilization and progress, and as with human rights, the principle that child rights must be defended ‘has become one of the commonplaces of our age.’ The impact of this concept is to delegitimize those societies who are unable to realize the norms of the CRC” (Pupavac 2002, Davidson 2011). No country wants to be regarded as “pre-modern” or uncivilized, so this need to preserve its reputation can be a powerful influence when it comes to the ratification of international legislation.

The second reason is related, but more powerful still—a nation’s economy. Countries, especially developing countries, that fail to ratify certain statutes that are framed as “universal,” especially those as sensitive as the ones having to do with human trafficking, might see an impact in the amount of financial assistance and other forms of foreign aid they receive, in trade relations and even in tourism. Ironically, this leaves these countries that are admonished for non-compliance with even fewer resources with which to address the problem.

The U.S. TIP Report and Neocolonial Anti-TIP Agenda

There is no better example of both of these concepts in action than the United States’ Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Report. Following the adoption of the Palermo Protocol by the international community, the United States, under the Bush administration, passed a national “Victims of Trafficking and Violence Prevention Act” (TVPA) in 2000. It reads,

The Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000

Under the Act, the US will not, as a matter of policy, provide non-humanitarian, non-trade-related assistance to any government that does not comply with the minimum standards [set out in the Act] and that is not making significant efforts to bring itself into compliance (Sec. 10a). In addition, such countries will also face US opposition to their seeking and obtaining funds from multilateral financial institutions including the World Bank and the IMF (Sec. 110(d)(1))

Box 2

Source: (“Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000”)

The TVPA is not an empty threat, so it is not unreasonable to assume that some countries might take actions to ratify certain conventions simply in order to comply with US “minimum standards” (TVPA).

In conjunction with the objectives of the TVPA, the U.S. State Department's Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons began issuing a yearly "Trafficking in Persons Report" in 2001 in which it ranks national governments in tiers based on their "perceived efforts to acknowledge and combat human trafficking" – based on U.S. guidelines ("Trafficking in Persons Report"). The tiers outlined are as follows:

<i>The Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act of 2000</i> Tier Placements	
Tier 1:	Countries whose governments fully comply with the TVPA's minimum standards.
Tier 2:	Countries whose governments do not fully comply with the TVPA's minimum standards, but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards.
Tier 2 Watchlist:	Countries whose governments do not fully comply with the TVPA's minimum standards, but are making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with those standards AND: a) The absolute number of victims of severe forms of trafficking is very significant or is significantly increasing; or b) There is a failure to provide evidence of increasing efforts to combat severe forms of trafficking in persons from the previous year; or c) The determination that a country is making significant efforts to bring themselves into compliance with minimum standards was based on commitments by the country to take additional future steps over the next year.
Tier 3:	Countries whose governments do not fully comply with the minimum standards and are not making significant efforts to do so.

Box 3

Source: "Trafficking in Persons Report"

While Tier 1 is the highest ranking, it does not indicate that a country does not have a human trafficking problem. A Tier 1 ranking simply indicates that a government has acknowledged the existence of human trafficking, has made efforts to address the problem, and that those efforts comply with the TVPA's minimum standards. Even once a country has achieved Tier 1 status, it must demonstrate "appreciable progress" in combating trafficking to maintain a Tier 1 ranking ("Trafficking in Persons Report").

With this system, the United States further globalized the human trafficking agenda and "not only became a major funder of anti-trafficking initiatives, but also put itself into the role of global anti-trafficking monitor" (Huijsmans and Baker 2012, 928). This language can be seen on the State Department's webpage about the TIP Report when it claims that the Tip Report "reflects the U.S. Government's commitment to global leadership on this key human rights and law enforcement issue" ("Trafficking in Persons Report"). These Trafficking in Persons reports have been important, "not least for the economic implications of performing poorly on this unilateral assessment of countries' anti-trafficking efforts" (Huijsmans and Baker 2012, 928). Because the TIP Report is seen as a reliable resource of anti-human trafficking efforts on the part of national governments, these countries do not only risk losing support from the United States, other donor organizations and financial institutions often take these rankings into consideration when deciding where to allocate funds.

The Trafficking in Persons Report is "the principal diplomatic tool to engage foreign governments on human trafficking," and certain embassy cables relating to the TIP report can

give us a lot of insight into how these diplomatic engagements unfold in each country ("Trafficking in Persons Report"). For example, a few months after the 2006 TIP Report in which Malaysia was placed on the Tier 2 Watchlist was released, The U.S. Embassy of Kuala Lumpur provides the following summary of a meeting between the Malaysian Attorney General and senior U.S. officials:

U.S. Embassy Cable, Kuala Lumpur 2006

3. Anti-Trafficking Legislation

The Government of Malaysia has not yet initiated the drafting of comprehensive anti-trafficking legislation pending a Cabinet-level decision as to whether to pursue a new law or to amend existing laws. The Inspector General of Police, the Minister of Women, Family and Community Development, and the Minister of Home Affairs, have all spoken publicly expressing their support for a new law, but all made it clear in conversations with U.S. officials that they look for advice from the Attorney General's Office (AGO). The Internal Security Ministry stated that the decision on the law rests jointly with the AGO and the Home Affairs Ministry.

Malaysia's Attorney General has expressed skepticism on the necessity and viability of passing a new law and expressed to senior U.S. officials that if the GOM were to pass such a law it would only be to satisfy the U.S. tier-ranking process. The Royal Malaysian Police have advised us that they intend to draft a proposed law which will then be submitted to the Attorney General's office for consideration, an action which would occur outside the normal law making process.

Box 4

Source: (Embassy Kuala Lumpur 2006, 06KUALALUMPUR2140)

This excerpt is a clear example of a country preferring to keep or slightly modify its existing legislation, presumably legislation that more accurately reflects its understanding of the TIP problems unique to Malaysia, and the U.S. pressuring the government officials to pass a completely new piece of legislation where the structure and provisions are deemed as compliant with U.S. TIP ideals. The Malaysian Attorney General clearly understands what it would mean economically and politically for Malaysia to stay on the Tier 2 Watch List or to slip even further to Tier 3 (which it does in 2007), so he is willing to entertain the idea, but not without expressing his discomfort. The U.S. uses conditionality to achieve what it considers "minimum standards" and it is important to keep in mind the power that the United States has over whether a certain country takes an action against TIP and even over whether it ratifies international accords like the Palermo Protocol, for the TIP Report greatly affects public image and international financial support.

Not every country reacts this way to the suggestion of drafting new Anti-TIP legislation. In fact, some are very willing to do it. Even so, one has to wonder whether the words in the final product are their own, considering the objective is to receive a specific "grade." The TVPA and the TIP Report Tier System can be seen as a kind of grading rubric for countries around the world. I argue that this rubric stifles the local understanding of the problem and that, in turn, it can create weaker policy—policy that is unrealistically difficult to implement given the country's resources, or policy that does not fully capture the reality of the trafficking problem, as it is locally experienced.

Parallel Pressures on Local Actors

The same types of pressure can be exerted on and felt by non-state actors such as NGOs and other local organizations. In a way, NGO funding politics are like a microcosm of the politics surrounding international diplomacy and foreign aid. These organizations' compliance with international understandings of these issues—through language adopted and policies implemented—is often meant to preserve their reputation and image among donors and other funding bodies, even these dominant understandings are incongruent with local understandings of childhood, labor, and more. Illustrating this point further are two pieces of ethnographic data—one from my fieldwork in Togo and one from my work with an NGO in India.

The influence of the international discourse on child labor and child trafficking on local organizations first struck me in Togo where I worked closely with the representative of the *Affaires Sociales* Ministry (Social Affaires) in Kpagouda. His name is Tani, and he is a young, good-natured government volunteer from Lomé, Togo's capital. When I first arrived he spoke to me about the fairly recent anti-trafficking law²³ that was passed and how his duties related to the provisions it set forth. After working with the U.S. Embassy cables, I know now that this national anti-TIP law was probably passed with significant pressure from the United States because in 2005 Togo was on the Tier 3 list and had been heavily criticized in that year's TIP report for not moving forward fast enough with this new legislation ("Country Narratives - Togo" 2005).

One of Tani's favorite ventures was the *club d'enfants* that he inaugurated in the village. He used these weekly "kids' club" meetings as a kind of after-school program in which he taught the children many things—songs, dances, riddles—and also sought to "sensitize" them to their rights as children and other relevant issues. He later told me that after joining the Ministry as a volunteer, he had undergone a 4-day yearly training session in Lomé on the rights of children, how to handle cases of abuse, neglect, and exploitation, and even what kinds of actions one should take in regards to repatriated children. Sitting in on these meetings at the time I was struck by how enthusiastically all of the children participated, but the significance of the precise language Tani was using did not dawn on me until now.

At one point the children learned a song about *Les droits de l'enfant* (the rights of the child)—essentially a bite-size version of the CRC set to music. Tani took this opportunity to drill a particular point home. He started a call-and-response chanting "I should only do work/tasks that are appropriate for my...?" The children would shout back "*Capacité!*" (Roughly, capacity, referring to one's size, strength, and other abilities). He repeated this about 10 times and the children got louder with each repetition. Notice Tani did not mention age at any point when speaking of labor. This moment was the CRC and the WFCLC in action—because this is how Tani was trained by UNICEF in the capital to talk about these things—but with a local twist. In rural Togo, an infrequency of birth certificates means that many people do not know their "real" age, in the legal sense. Thus, Tani taught them that the kind of work appropriate for them was work that corresponded to their abilities (physical and mental), not their age. The fact that Tani

²³ Loi 2005-009 Du 3 Aout 2005 Relative Au Trafic D'enfants Au Togo (2005).

understood this and presented the information slightly differently exemplifies how these dominant understandings stifle local knowledge of the situation.

Similarly, Tani had the children put on a skit about youth who leave the village. The message or moral of the act was that migration at a young age has its dangers, but the most interesting part to me was that it was framed in terms of migration, not trafficking. The children in the skits exhibited agency and were actively choosing whether to migrate for employment or not, weighing the pros and cons. The children may not have understood this activity framed in the language of trafficking and victimization because it would not have captured the full picture of their reality. This is an example of how the language of victimization risks imposing on a community that does not relate to it. Tani has an obligation to enforce the new anti-TIP law because neglecting to do so would mean risking his post, but he has “sensitized” both children and adults to this law using more of a local narrative.

Like Tani’s use of the CRC and WFCLC in the kids’ club, the following extended example from India showcases the influence of the dominant international discourse on child labor. In India I was working at a skills-training institute in Rajasthan established in 2008 to provide migrants with affordable skills-training. The idea is that with proper training in carpentry, marble-cutting, tailoring, motorcycle repair, and other trades, migrants will be able to secure more profitable employment and even start up their own enterprises, instead of migrating to out-of-state urban centers and falling into low-paying (and in many cases exploitative) employment. The institute's target population includes individuals who are over 18, financially needy (cannot afford other private skills training institutes), and on the threshold of migration.

From a side project in which I redesigned the institute’s English brochure, I learned a bit more about its marketing and funding strategy. It is not difficult to see why there might be limited government support and international funding for a program that aids able-bodied men, the demographic of the majority of the migrant population in Rajasthan. Many more donors (especially international donors) are interested in helping those who are more “pitiable”—such as youth and women. This is precisely why I was encouraged to put a picture of a physically handicapped 18 year old girl holding up a template for the garments she had just learned to sew on the cover of the brochure. The truth is that the institute has hosted far fewer female “batches” of trainees than male batches and though it advertises itself as training and employment placement program for rural youth, many trainees are in their late 20s and 30s.

When I asked why the institute’s training policies barred individuals under 18 years old, I was told outright by my mentor that this was a strategic decision because the



The trainee I was asked to photograph for the Aajeevika brochure

Institute “could not afford to lose funding by being perceived as facilitating child labor.” This outcome is socially inefficient because the age of compulsory education in India is only 14, so if one attends school every year until one is allowed to discontinue one’s studies, that person still cannot legally work most informal sector jobs that would be available to him with that level of education. This person would be caught between unemployment and working illegally as a child laborer. In this case, Aajeevika complied with the dominant narrative about children and their capacities when it comes to labor, but the situation again reflects how international policy affects the lives of real people on the ground by influencing local organizations and the policies they implement.

1.5 Compassion Fatigue and the Commodification of Extreme Cases

Apart from demonstrating how international and subsequent national laws can put pressure on local actors to adopt a certain vocabulary and implement certain policies, the example of the girl and the brochure points to a broader global phenomenon that has likewise influenced policy attention-- compassion fatigue and the subsequent use of sensationalism, which has heavily influenced the discursive climate and policy attention to child trafficking and child labor.

What does child labor look like? Do images of tear-stained cheeks, torn dirty clothing, exposed ribs, and young children carrying heavy loads or handling dangerous tools come to mind? If so, this would indicate the success of child rights advocates in highlighting the worst, most extreme cases of the abuse and exploitation of children worldwide. The image saturation in the Western world of these children through a “well-established trope in media—poverty porn,” have yielded an affliction called “compassion fatigue” (Meikle 2013). In a world riddled with compassion fatigue, only the most heart-wrenching, sensational stories get out. We no longer care to pay attention “[unless] someone is dead or dying” (ibid.).

Ali Heller, a doctoral candidate in socio-cultural anthropology at Washington University in St. Louis who is writing a dissertation on fistula patients in Niger, asks in her blog, “why must we highlight the extreme cases when the norm is bad enough?” (Heller 2013). While this journalistic strategy might have spread awareness and raised funds for a noble cause, it is important to consider what effect this has had on policy and subsequent efforts to help child migrants, who represent the norm rather than the extreme. One way to think about it is to consider stereotypes; as Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie has said, “The problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story” (Ngozi Adichie 2009). The focus on extreme examples of highly vulnerable child migrants such as victims of sex-trafficking, organ-trafficking, bonded labor, and “modern slavery” has resulted in “a totalizing discourse where the diversity of children’s experiences and work situations becomes treated as equivalent, reducing all working children to the status of victims” and characterizing them without agency (Davidson 2005).

The problem with this is that many child migrants are not victims of trafficking, but are nevertheless categorized as such. This artificially inflates the number of victims of child-trafficking worldwide. This has kept it on the political agenda as a pressing issue, but incomplete information breeds incomplete policy, policy not tailored to all child migrants. By identifying independent child migrants as victims of trafficking, we miss an opportunity to study

the bigger issues. The strong focus on trafficking and the worst forms of child labor in child rights advocacy has “framed the debates about independent child migration and many in-depth studies have centered on working conditions and potential hazards at the destination” (Hashim and Thorsen 2011, 81). Not as many studies have focused on sending regions and the underlying reasons behind child migration. Many child migrants “by no means view themselves as ‘victims’. As they make their decisions with or without adult involvement, they may view migration as a significant opportunity to exercise their own life choices and improve their opportunities” (Whitehead 2011, 120).

1.6 International Legislation and Child Migration

In short, much of the legislation explored in this chapter exhibits top-down thinking, heavy Western influence, and a failure to include “local” understandings of childhood and labor. Its prevalence, both in terms of number of ratifications and influence on the ground, regardless of these shortcomings, can be attributed to outside pressures such as the U.S. TIP program and other donor interests. Finally, a focus on a non-representational subset of cases meant to galvanize support obscures how large and diverse this population of child migrants is and has prevented a deeper investigation into the source of this phenomenon.

In order to address these shortcomings as they relate to the movement of youth, researchers must actively question, complicate, and deconstruct the trafficking and child labor discourse and explore its effects. To this end, the following chapter will show, through primary research, that children much younger than eighteen can be agentive economic actors in a world that affords them few other options, not quite fitting the role of the “victim” they have been relegated to. I will first highlight how the high policy visibility of child trafficking and child labor has meant that comparatively little research has been done on independent child migration. I will then deconstruct the term “independent” and entertain counterarguments about constrained agency. Finally, I will highlight the profiles of six child migrants that I interviewed in both Togo and India to show why acknowledging even very “thin” agency is important.

Chapter 2: Independent Child Migrants- constraints, vulnerability, and the importance of agency

2.1 Child Migration Research Eclipsed by Child Trafficking

Migration at the international level has been increasing exponentially, as *Figure 2* shows. In 2005, there were an estimated 191 million international migrants, nearly two-and-a-half times the figure in 1965 (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2006, 20). Five short years later, in 2010, this number had risen to over 214 million (ibid.). Just over 12.4 percent, about 27 million, of this total number of international migrants are youth aged 15 to 24 (ibid.). Moreover, at least a third of all migrants from developing countries are estimated to be 18 years of age or younger²⁴ (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2006, 4; UNFPA 2005). Although internal migration is not as well understood as international migration, it is projected that an even higher percentage of internal migration is made up of this young demographic (Rajan 2013, 6-8). Although children and youth account for a large proportion of migrants in both international and internal migration streams, as of 2011, only about 60 studies had been done on child migration worldwide, and of those, only 16 contain quantitative survey data (Whitehead 2011, 102). Children's migration is by no means a new phenomenon, present in almost all communities that have a high incidence of adult migration, but specific attention to it is relatively recent within policy and academic spheres²⁵ (UNFPA 2005).

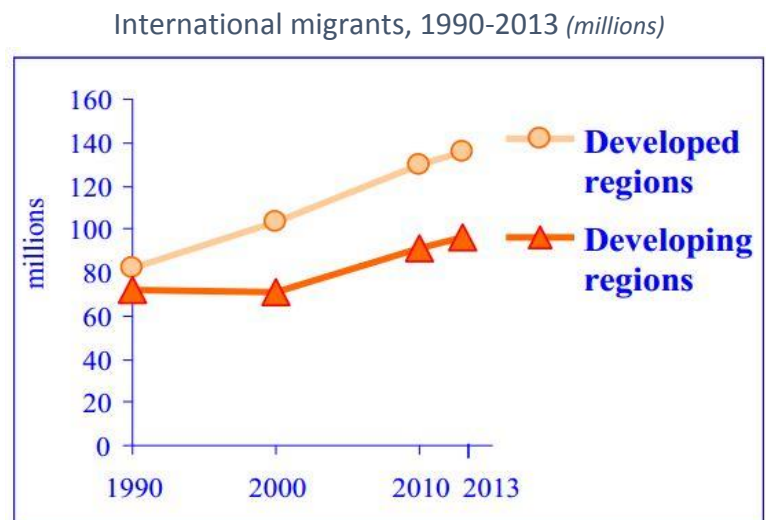


Figure 2

Source: (UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs 2013)

The attention child migration *has* garnered has been eclipsed by the high visibility of a particular group—trafficked children and other children in extremely dangerous situations. Whitehead, a professor of anthropology, gender and development at the University of Sussex and director of the Migration Development Research Centre on Migration (now the Migrating out of Poverty Research Programme Consortium, or RPC) maintains that “as a result, [of this visibility] these particular segments of child migrants and their experiences are seen as representing all child migrants” (Whitehead 2011, 104). While not visible in the sense that they are easy to find or identify, trafficked children have extraordinarily high policy visibility. This has

²⁴ Given the high level of age misreporting due to fear of being found in violation of certain laws, the true number of migrant children in the world could be much higher

²⁵ “Children on the Move in the Developing World,” a conference held by the Development Research Centre on Migration, Globalization and Poverty at the University of Sussex, UK, in May 2008 is especially regarded as having been an impetus for further research on child migration (Ensor and Goździak 2010, 7)

resulted from, as I mentioned in Ch 1, the success of well-intentioned advocacy groups in raising awareness and funds for this particular population of child migrants by focusing on extreme cases despite them being “very much outside the norm” (Hashim and Thorsen 2011, 13-14). Further, much of the non-academic literature on this topic “comes from agencies providing services especially for children who have gotten into serious difficulties” such as those who are victims of sex-trafficking and organ-trafficking, so it highlights concerns specific to this population (Whitehead 2011, 104).

At the moment, the policy space to make recommendations regarding independent child migrants is very narrow. It is flanked, on one side, by the international conventions and protocols aimed at protecting children and, on the other side, by the success of advocacy efforts aimed at particularly abused and vulnerable children: children in domestic servitude or bonded labor, “street” children, and “trafficked” children. The success of international advocacy on exploited and abused child migrants has inadvertently made it difficult, if not impossible, to address the very real needs of other child migrants (Whitehead and Hashim 2005, 4).

2.2 Truly Independent?

My intent is not to trivialize the plight of children in dire circumstances. I mean to show how the bias toward this group in terms of research, policy, and mobilization of resources is problematic for other child migrants. Since research available heavily influences policy produced, the result is pieces of legislation like the WFCLC and the Palermo Protocol, examined in Chapter 1, that do not present a nuanced account of children’s mobility or their relationship with work or labor. Because the Palermo Protocol necessitates the ambiguous notion of “exploitation” as the “key to defining a trafficked child,” and since victims of trafficking are the most visible in this discourse, the association of children migrating alone and of necessarily bad outcomes is inextricably entrenched, precluding the possibility of the benefits of migration (Whitehead 2007).

In this discursive climate, there is no room for independent child labor migrants. Even academic literature that distances itself from this dominant negative view of child migration employs terms that still perpetuate normative notions of childhood. Children can be theorized as “migrating alongside migrant workers,” essentially passive dependents tagging along behind the “primary” migrants—the child’s parents, siblings, friends, intermediaries, or other adults (Whitehead 2011). Other terms that aim to describe children migrating on their own are “separated children,” “asylum-seeking children” and “unaccompanied minors,” (Hashim and Thorsen 2011, 17-18). I argue that these seem to impose a value judgment and imply that these children are *missing* something--the presence of adults. It assumes that adults are necessarily involved in the successful movement of youth and that the lack of this parental presence automatically puts children in a position of helplessness (Hashim and Thorsen 2011, 5).

The above terms did not seem to align with many of the remarkable stories of resiliency that I had been privileged to hear. I chose to employ the term “independent child migrant” because it was the only one that allowed for the possibility of both positive *and* negative outcomes of youth migration, but it also begs certain questions. To get to simply “child migrant,” one has to acknowledge the possibility of a child as a migrant separate from his or her

parents. Examples of this aspect are fairly easy to prove, as there are many children living and working “at destination” without their parents or guardians. To accept the addition of “independent,” one must ask, “independent of what?” It is not just the absence of a parental presence or the establishment of the child as a separate entity; “independent” invokes autonomy and self-reliance; the ability to exercise agency. This part is more difficult to prove or measure. For the purposes of this paper, I am employing “the capacity of individuals to act independently and to make their own free choices” as the definition of agency (Barker 2003). If agency is the ability to make one’s own choices, this, to me, is at the core of what sets independent child migrants apart from victims of trafficking; not that they somehow make up a different demographic or that they do not navigate the same risks, but that they consented, they wanted to migrate, they exercised their agency.

2.3 Children’s Agency and its Structural Constrains

One might counter this argument by asking, “are the choices of independent child migrants really their own?” “Is anyone in these poor, rural, underserved communities really independent when they have so few viable choices?” Choices, and thus agency, are constrained by structures and can amount to structural violence. If structures are “the recurrent patterned arrangements which influence or limit the choices and opportunities available,” then the structure versus agency debate questions whether individuals act as independent “free agents” or in a manner dictated by social structure (Barker 2003). The structures at play that influence a child’s ability to exercise agency are shown in *Figure 3*.

At the macro-level, there is public policy which dictates the legal dimensions of one’s life—the age of majority, the age of compulsory education, child labor laws, child trafficking laws—as well as the resources and quality of resources available to you, such as education, healthcare, and so on. At the meso-level, there is society which dictates different classes and stereotypes and expectations therein. In society we see the manifestation of institutional bias, racism, sexism, and more, and it normalizes and “others” certain practices such as migration. Society is further influenced by history and policy. Next we have the community, which may have certain unique practices relating to, say, religion or ethnicity, such as marriage practices, land distribution, gender norms, family structure and dynamics. Influenced by society and the community as a whole is the family at the micro-level. The family might have its own unique traditions, values and collective goals, separate from those of the community. Finally there is the individual, influenced by all of the above layers, but owner of his or her own hopes, desires, beliefs and values (Crépeau et al. 2013).

Structures Acting on Individual Agency

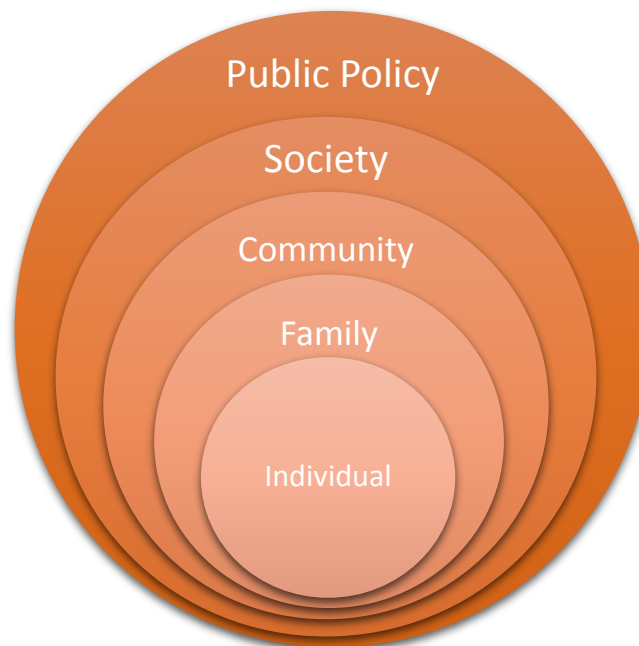


Figure 3

Since agency, the ability to exercise choice, is affected by the options available which are in turn dictated by all of the aforementioned structures, it would be too simplistic to say that independent child migrants transcend all of this and act completely autonomously. Various researchers have referred to this limited agency as “thin” (Klocker 2007, Yaqub 2009; Whitehead, Hashim and Iversen 2007; Huijsmans 2008). Klocker details how agency is “thinned” by factors such as “the social obedience and submission that are central to child-adult relations; internalized inferiority from prevailing gender values; stereotypical attitudes towards ethnic or regional groups and towards people who are simply poor (Klocker 2007). Since different people’s agency is “thinned” to different degrees by different factors, agency, for both children and adults in these communities, is on a continuum. It is important to also note that agency and vulnerability (to different risks and types of exploitation) are not mutually exclusive. One can be autonomous and still be vulnerable to a number of risk factors. Instead, “both characteristics may manifest themselves simultaneously in varying degrees, depending on the children’s circumstances” (Bluebond-Langner and Korbin 2007, 242). Despite all of this grey area, the consent, the choice, the agency (no matter how “thin” or “thick”) of children under the age of 18 is categorically disregarded by policymakers and practitioners and they are denied the right to choose what direction their lives take. Without an understanding of the complexity of this issue in the real lives of the people it affects, policy and efforts to support victims of trafficking and other crimes, which are assumed to encompass and protect all mobile children, will continue to fail to meet the needs of independent child migrants.

2.4 Measuring the “Thickness” of Agency

Determining thickness of agency is very difficult to do. Childhood researchers and other academics have begun to further our understanding of independent child migrants through pro-child studies that aim to identify their specific needs. These studies explore “children’s lived experiences, how young persons are actively involved in their worlds; in shaping them, in negotiating them and in challenging them” (Hashim and Thorsen 2011, 127). They have attempted to gain as much understanding as possible about the situations these migrants are in, their motivations, and learn what kind of support they need to have more positive migratory experiences, or at least fewer negative ones. They have done this by consulting and speaking with the children themselves, listening to their opinions, and giving them a voice by acknowledging that their age does not prevent them from being able to exercise agency and make decisions about their own lives. I offer the following profiles of migrants that I spoke to as a contribution to that growing dialogue and as way to continue to think about the question of agency.

Every child migrant’s experience is unique, characterized by a number of overlapping factors and structures partially enumerated above, but in my interviews I did begin to notice some common patterns and ultimately identified the following six²⁶ “types” of child migrants—The Runaway, The Legacy, The Student, The Dropout, the Adventurer, and The Girl. For each of these profiles, I will recount the migration story of an individual whose circumstances I think particularly encompass the main features of that type. I will then identify what these specific features are and add an analysis of the “thickness” of the migrant’s agency, given contextual circumstances, site-specific themes at play, and areas of vulnerability. Finally, I will hold the child’s unique situation against the legal provisions of laws that would have had jurisdiction over such a case and show why they would have been inadequate, ineffective, or even detrimental. Examining the complexity in the lives of real individuals is the clearest way to see how easily legal binaries (child/adult, victim/criminal, exploited/not exploited, etc) breakdown on the ground.

2.5 Child Migrant Profiles

The Runaway

I try my best to keep up as my host sister Tajal leads my translator, Shweta, and me well beyond the borders of Gurutaraj, the village I was staying in in the Kherlumbar block of Udaipur in southern Rajasthan. Soon, after Tajal pauses to decide which path to take now that the paved road had ended, we turn and head up a hill, keeping parallel to a wall of cacti that separated two fields of wheat. She was taking us to a man she knew of who had left the village at a very young age to go work in Mumbai.

²⁶ This is by no means an exhaustive list. There are likely many more types of child migrants that could be proposed.

His mother greets us first. Tall, elegant, and vibrant against the foliage in her bright red poshak²⁷, she invites us to the porch of a small cement home painted bright blue and adorned with Rajasthani wall paintings. Tajal introduces us and explains that we were hoping to talk to her son, Abhimanyu about his work in Mumbai.

There was no need for her to call out, as Abhimanyu had already emerged from behind the curtain that led inside the house. Smiling in a purple sleeveless shirt with a thin gold chain around his neck, Abhimanyu sits on the ledge of the porch, ready to tell us his story.

Abhimanyu is the eldest child in the family. His parents are both subsistence farmers who had never left the village in search of employment. Now 33, he tells us that he was merely 16 or 17 when he decided to go work in Mumbai. I asked if his decision was at all connected to his schooling and he answered, “I was in 10th standard and actually doing pretty well in school, but my parents weren’t giving me any spending money. I wanted to go out and earn for myself, but I didn’t tell them I was leaving because I knew that they would try to stop me. They would want me to keep with my studies.”

We asked about the process. Why Mumbai? Did he know of specific employment opportunities there or was he just going to play it by ear? How did he travel there? Was he alone? Was he afraid? Why or why not? Apparently, one of his classmate’s family had a travel business in Kherlumbar and they told him of a relative of theirs who owned a balloon factory in Mumbai. His classmate’s family assured him that if he went there, their relative would employ him.

Abhimanyu left in the middle of the night with “nothing but the clothes on [his] back.”” He walked the 7km to Kherlumbar, met up with his classmate, and got on a bus to Udaipur free of cost thanks to his friend’s connection to the travel agency. His classmate actually accompanied him as far as Udaipur, about 45minutes away. Once there, the classmate pointed out to Abhimanyu other travelers who were going to Mumbai, some specifically to the same balloon factory, and was told to “stick with them.” From Udaipur, Abhimanyu took a train with money borrowed from his classmate.

He made it to the balloon factory safely and became the classmate’s brother in law’s assistant at the factory. This man allowed Abhimanyu to live with him and paid him an initial salary of 800 rs/month (\$13 USD) which eventually increased to 4,000 rs/month (\$67 USD) during the 4-5 years he worked there. He mostly ran errands and “loved it there” because “it was easy work and work was good. I had the opportunity to rise quickly through the ranks.”

Meanwhile, his parents had not heard from him for about 6 months, until he works up the courage to call home. They were furious and begged him to come home, but in those

²⁷ The traditional dress of women in the Rajput community of Rajasthan. The poshak consists of the *kanchli* (supportive undershirt with sleeves), a waist-length *kurta* (a sleeveless blouse), the *ghagra* (skirt), and the *odhna* (veil).

4-5 years he ended up only returning for his sister's wedding. Of the money he was making, he was keeping 30% for himself and sending 70% to his family with people he knew and trusted bus drivers who were returning to Kherlumbur from Mumbai.

At this point in the interview, his mother chimed in and said that even with the money he had been sending them, she would have still preferred he stay and continue his studies. Abhimanyu smiled and disagreed saying "no, money is better."

Abhimanyu's employer saw potential in him and when he started entertaining the idea of starting his own business, he offered Abhimanyu 10,000rs a month to stay, but "of course, understood and supported me when I said no." Now, Abhimanyu owns and operates his own trash business and shop which people call if they need trash or recyclables picked up. He is now making 5-6,000rs/month.

When asked about whether he regretted not taking the 10,000rs offer, he responded "the difference I make up in the satisfaction of knowing that I am my own boss and have my own business." Abhimanyu is still sending 70% of his salary to his family, which helped pay for his sister's wedding and other household expenses. For now "Mumbai is fine, but if I save enough money I think I would like to come back to Gurutaraj and farm or build a house or start another business, maybe a general store, a garment store, a mill, or something like that."



Abhimanyu at his mother's home

In all, I talked to four child migrants who had run away from home in India (all male) and six in Togo (five males, one female), along with some of their family members. The narrative of "the runaway" is typically marked by one or several of these factors—intergenerational conflict, family poverty, frustration with school (not learning anything because of poor education quality, or not passing important²⁸ exams, or both), and a longing for adventure or

exposure to a wider world. Runaways are among the most agentive of child migrants. These children "run away because they have information regarding where they can run to and the

²⁸ Both in India and Togo there are exams at the end of high school that essentially decide what path your future takes. It is a lot of stress to put on students who do not have the resources to excel, because they are nevertheless compared to the children of the nation's elites who perhaps live in cities and attended private schools.

possibilities of being able to survive should they do so (Hashim 2008, 8; cited in Hashim and Thorsen 2011, 43) They actively weigh their options, however limited, may or may not consult their parents, siblings, elders, or peers, and choose to migrate away from home based on reasoning that reflects their personal values. In some cases, the child has spoken with the parents and the parents refused, but the child left anyway. In other cases, the child left in complete secrecy. The runaway may or may not seek or accept the help of an intermediary.

Applied to Abhimanyu's case, even at the young age of 16, he decided to leave home without telling anybody except his friend and his friend's family. As far as motivation, intergenerational relationships and the fact that his parents weren't giving him spending money played the biggest role. The desire for his own money can be seen as a desire to be autonomous, which he also demonstrated choosing to not return home for so many years²⁹. The vulnerability he might have faced in the act of migrating alone was counteracted by his decision to consult and accept help from a peer and to take safe transportation, rather than seeking out an intermediary. Though technically a child, Abhimanyu excelled at his job, through remittances became one of his family's main sources of income, and eventually started his own business. The fact that his own business paid less than what his previous employer was offering to pay him to stay at the factory and his comments to me on this decision solidifies the idea that autonomy is very important to him. Further, Abhimanyu has plans to return and impact his community through a different economic venture in the future. Abhimanyu chose to break from a tradition of agriculture.

Since Abhimanyu did not cross national borders, only state, he did not face constraints on his movement such as border patrol that might have stopped an unaccompanied minor. As a result, he did not have to seek out an intermediary and took safe transportation to his destination. If we turn from trafficking legislation to child labor standards, as far as exploitation, Abhimanyu's wages were well below the minimum daily wage in Rajasthan, even for an unskilled worker, but how are we to judge whether this was "exploitation" or a "worst form of child labor, especially when it is a reality even for adults in the informal labor sector? Regarding conditions in the workplace, Abhimanyu worked as an assistant and as such was likely not doing any dangerous work with machinery. He had a good relationship with his employer, who became something of a mentor to him. He learned a lot of things and gained experience that has led him to become economically independent as well as a provider for his family. The WFCLC and any derivative national laws that ban child labor³⁰ and enforce this ban would probably have hurt Abhimanyu in this situation unless, as I will discuss in Chapter 3, there were effective repatriation and rehabilitation programs to accompany these employer raids.

The Legacy

Weddings have a way of bringing people together in Gurutaraj. All of the migrant men in the families, extended families, and even neighbors of the betrothed who are working in Udaipur, Ahmedabad, and other major destinations for circular labor migrants make their way back to the village for the multi-day ceremonies.

²⁹ This village was characterized by circular migration and in circular migration one typically returns every 4-6 months. Waiting years to return, by choice, is rare.

³⁰ Indian Child Labor law was most recently updated in 2006 to ban "soft" labor as well.

One day my host family's Rajput³¹ neighbors and good friends were celebrating the arrival of their youngest son's new bride to the village, for in India, much like in Togo, it is the woman who moves in with her husband's family after being married. I was invited to come over and was lucky enough to witness some of the Rajput marriage traditions which involve the groom and his mother symbolically welcoming the new bride and accepting her into their family. The next day, my host mother suggested that I interview the groom, as he had been migrating to Ahmedabad for several years and would be returning in a few days.



Tejpal and his new wife on the day she joins her mother-in-law's home

Tejpal greets me cordially and his mother brings out some water for us as we sit down in the courtyard. He explains that he is the youngest of four siblings, with an older brother and two older sisters. His father used to be a private driver in Ahmedabad but had recently retired because "he is too old now for such work." His older brother is also a driver, although he worked as a waiter in a hotel for several years. He himself went to school until he was 17 and

then, he says, "I left my studies because I wanted to help my family. Classes were OK but I felt that I needed to help my family financially like my brother since my father was not working anymore." He says his father had no problem with his decision to leave school for work because "he did the same thing, at an even earlier age; after 8th standard I think." And so, the next time his brother came to visit, he left with his youngest sibling in tow. Although he did not have an assured job waiting for him, his brother was able to find him a position at a different hotel restaurant within three days.

Tejpal worked at the restaurant for 2-3 years, coming home every 4-5 months for "functions at home—weddings, Holi, and other important events, my employer was very flexible" and made 3,500 rupees a month, which eventually increased to 4,500 rupees a month (\$75). The money he remitted ranged from 10,000-15,000 rupees each visit. When asked about his work conditions, he answered that "they were good. I only had to work from 11am-3pm and then from 7pm-11pm and the restaurant provided food, but

³¹ A member of one of the patrilineal clans of western, central, northern India and some parts of Pakistan. They claim to be descendants of ruling Hindu warrior classes of North India. Classified as a "forward" rather than a "backward" caste (Balfour, 473).

the money was not enough. I have to pay 2,000-3,000 just to rent my room in Ahmedabad."

Soon after, Tejpal found a job at the restaurant he currently works at which pays 7,000 rupees each month. He has supplemented this salary recently because he learned to drive like his father and brother and is "driving people on the side, for extra money to pay for the marriage." He adds, "I only drive a few times a week because it is very tiring, but it pays very well, 10,000-15,000 a month depending on how much I drive. I have to work for my family for my whole life, so I have to pace myself." When I ask whether he enjoys living in the city, he replies that "Gurutaraj and Kherlumbar are much better than the big city. I would rather be here with my family, but I need to provide for them. I hope to maybe open up a business in Kherlumbar in the future."

In a majority of households in both India and Togo from which I identified and interviewed a migrant, there was also at least one other family member that had migrated at some point in time. Legacies are influenced by these examples of migrants in their families. They may or may not migrate at the same age, to the same location, or work in the same labor sector. The whole family--or at least the parents or guardians-- is typically involved in the decision of whether or not to migrate, where, and how. The extent to which parents push for labor over continued education depends on the family's financial situation. Sometimes the legacy decides to go because of the pride that comes from following in someone's footsteps; sometimes the legacy is mostly pressured by the family's expectation of a traditional role to be filled, a sense of duty; sometimes it is a little bit of both. Factors highlighted in other profiles such as the desire for adventure, financial independence, and family poverty converge to influence the legacy's decision.

In Tejpal's case, it is difficult to determine how the retirement³² of a breadwinner, his father, measures up to Tejpal's pride as a man of this particular family which has a history of circular migration. Other anecdotal evidence suggests that this employment strategy had been normalized within the family and had become part of a household accumulation strategy, rather than a desperate fight against abject poverty. Put into the context of the village of Gurutaraj, I think it is important to reiterate from the fieldsite descriptions that Tejpal's family, my host family, and a handful of other Rajput families were technically members of a high caste relative to other members of the village, as it was mostly comprised of "tribals" or STs from the Meena tribe. My own data in addition to anecdotal evidence and Aajeevika's Kherlumbar migration report show that driving, hotel work, and working in shops are typically reserved³³ for Rajputs and other "general castes" members, while jobs like construction and work in factories that required manual labor were usually associated with Scheduled Tribes (STs) and Scheduled Castes (SCs)³⁴. Tejpal saw working as a hotel employee and driver as a fulfillment of his role as a

³² The retirement, death, or sickness of a breadwinner have similar effects on child migrants' decision-making.

³³ See figure 6 in Appendix

³⁴ Considered the "lowest" of the castes.

Rajput male who was coming of age. Several years later his motivations turned to accumulating wealth for his future marriage, a socially necessitated life event as well as a family value, and he succeeded. Now he is able to provide for his wife and family, although he must work very hard to do so.

Like Abhimanyu, Tejpal was affected by land segmentation and the lack of sustainable and “suitable” (for a Rajput) employment opportunities close by. The fact that he longs to come home to his village suggests that he would have made different choices if there were different opportunities available him, viable opportunities close to the Gurutaraj, but it is unclear whether this necessarily means the choice was not his own. Perhaps he, like many child migrants, simply made the choice to migrate given opportunities available to him, which are structurally influenced.

Also like Abhimanyu, Tejpal did not cross any national borders, so he did not face any major constraints on his movement. As a result, he was able to travel without incident with his brother. However, if the provisions of the Palermo Protocol were enforced in this case, Tejpal’s consent to migration and to traveling with his brother would have been disregarded considering that he was not yet 18 and that his low salary could have been deemed exploitative.

The Student

One day François and Jacob stop by my host family’s homestead on their way back from the fields and inform me that they planned to leave for Benin that same night. By this time, two other Duke students and I had already gotten permission and made plans to go to Benin for a few days to examine this particular migration destination and speak to some of the Beninese employers of young migrant men from Togo. The three of us talk a bit about their travel plans and agree to try and connect again in Benin so I could interview them again at destination. Assuming I would see them later that evening before they left, my host sisters and I set out to find eggs for a chocolate cake we wanted to attempt to bake that night. To my delight, the cake turns out wonderfully, despite the lack of many of the tools I would have considered essential, such as an oven, a way to measure the temperature of the fire, and a cake pan. Long after the sun goes down, leaving us with nothing but flashlights and lanterns, the homestead is a truly abuzz with laughter and cries of joy. Many neighbors join us as we dance, blow out candles for no one’s birthday in particular, and devour the cake. I insist that some be set aside for François and Jacob as a parting gift, but they never come. Only then did it occur to me that their cell phones would not work outside of Togo and the likelihood of us finding each other in Benin was slim indeed.

Although I did not see the boys again that summer after their journey, I did chance upon François’ family while conducting my household survey in Kpagouda Pough. Their home is located up on the mountain right next to an enormous, beautiful baobab tree. Tani’s mother is out in the courtyard husking corn, her young daughter sorting through a bowl of baobab seeds at her side, when Jesper and I catch her attention. She and her husband welcome us and begin

to tell us about their children with palpable pride. They explain that the two children in the home, a young girl and boy, are two of six children, François being the third oldest overall and eldest male. François' oldest sister is married and lives in Kpagouda down in the plain, "and is raising two children of her own." The second oldest sister migrated to Benin "since a long time back" and is now married and working in a hotel there. Tani, currently in Benin, had been migrating there every summer since he was 16, "but only to faire la rentrée, so he can pay for his school fees. This year he will go for his Bac³⁵ and then to university, God willing." The next youngest sister "went to Benin last year at age 16 and is now in Nigeria working for a family in their home, cleaning and tending to their children. Last year she brought back money and assiettes (dinnerware), so we are hoping she does well this year too. She will be home in December." The youngest two attend the primary school on the mountain, but "will be moving down to the plain like Tani for collège and lycée³⁶."



François' family

Before leaving, Jesper reminds me to take a photo of the family, as we had been doing with many of our interviewees, with the promise that I would print them and send them back to Togo for them to keep. The mother and daughter sit at the base of the baobab while the son runs back in the house. He returns wearing an oversized coat and hands his father a radio. The father places a cigarette in his mouth and nods to signal that they are ready.

I was unable to speak to François' parents about each of their children and their individual decisions to migrate, but theirs is an example of a household with multiple young circular labor migrants. Although only three out of the six seem to be going to school regularly, education is clearly important to this family. Although the parents did not indicate this explicitly, it is possible to infer given the reference to "moving down to the plain."

Kpagouda Pough only has a primary school. To continue on to middle and high school, many children like Tani are sent to live with other families in Kpagouda's plain region³⁷, in nearby towns, or even in southern Togo. This system of fostering is well established in West Africa. My host grandmother, who housed both François, Jacob, and another boy named Victor,

³⁵ The baccalauréat, known colloquially as le bac, is an test which French and international students take at the end of high school.

³⁶ The equivalent of middle school and high school, respectively.

³⁷ When I asked my host mother for clarification about this, she explained that most school children return home for lunch at midday and then return to school in the afternoon. For children living in Kpagouda's mountain region, Kpagouda Pough, this is too far a trek to do multiple times a day so it is easier to live with foster families.

treated them all as sons of her own, and in turn they cultivated her fields and were able to go to school. In some cases, like with many of the young students who go to southern Togo, children work in the homes (girls) or fields (boys) of the families that are fostering them, and the families in turn pay for their school fees. Enduring abusive working conditions, physical, and even sexual abuse at the hands of fostering families is not uncommon, even when the families are blood relatives, but often this form of migration is a means to an end—education.

These schools are not expensive private schools. Even public schools in Togo are cost-prohibitive for many families. School fees recently rose in 2008 and children have to pay for their own uniforms, books, and school supplies, with few scholarships or *kits escolairs* available. Given these constraints, François must migrate to stay in school and achieve his dreams of higher education. Even though François is not bringing home a motorcycle or other items of social value, the hopeful and excited manner in which he spoke of his impending trip with Jacob and the other boys (from the intro) suggests that *faire la rentrée* is nevertheless considered a way youth *font l'aventure* and the decision to leave is still one that is in line with the young migrants' desires. François' parents' small home and few prized personal possessions suggested to me that they do without in order for their children to have the best futures possible and that procuring these good outcomes and migrating often go hand-in-hand. François, by contrast, not only crossed national boundaries into Benin, he also helped minors and other students do so. Though these



François and Jacob cultivating in Kpagouda several weeks before leaving for Benin

other students fully consented to migrating with him, asking him to show them the way, had he been apprehended at the border, he would have either had to pay a hefty bribe, or he would have incurred a fine corresponding to the articles in the 2005 Togolese Anti-Child Trafficking Law. If he were instead apprehended within Benin, Beninese Immigration Law might find him in violation for crossing the border illegally. Their low pay might have categorized this agricultural work a “worst form of child labor,” but it is less likely that the WFCLC would have been invoked as labor inspections tend to happen more often in urban areas. Further if Tani and the boys he was traveling with were turned back, even if no charges were filed and no bribes paid, they still would have wasted money on transportation and have to bear the ridicule and shame of returning home empty-handed (Hashim and Thorsen 2011, 77). Moreover, since the motivating factor for the migration was to earn money for school, the boys' schooling is now in jeopardy.

The Dropout

At a new village conducting interviews of past trainees for STEP Academy, my colleague Sanjay and I are waiting outside a tire shop in the center of town for an interviewee who is running very late. In the meantime, Sanjay offers to help me with my interviews with child migrants. On an impulse, he approaches and taps a young boy on the shoulder and asks him if he or any of his friends have ever worked in Surat, a city just over the border of southern Rajasthan into Gujarat known in this district as a common destination for migrants, especially young migrants working in the garment industry. The boy answers in the affirmative and after Sanjay explains the nature of my research and assures him that I was not working for the government, he agrees to speak with us.

Currently 17 years old, the boy, nicknamed Suru, tells us that he has been working in Surat for four years. Suru had studied until 5th standard, but he could not seem to pass his exams. "School was not good. I tried my but I could not do well in my work and there was some conflict with the teachers."³⁸ My good friend left for Surat the year before and told me that Surat is good and work there is good." Suru tells us that his parents, members of the Bhil tribe, who never attended school themselves, probably wanted him to stay in school but that they said since he was the oldest of their 5 children, he could help provide for his siblings' education instead.

He waited until his friend, then 13 years old, returned home and Suru asked him to take him to Surat. His friend helped Suru come into contact with a contractor (essentially a recruiter of laborers) for factories in Surat and he secured employment. Before Suru left, his parents gave him 500rs, but the bus to Surat alone ended up costing him 300rs. We ask him whether he was nervous to go and he responds, "A little bit, but most of the men in my village work in Surat, so I did not have fear or anxiety."

He and his friend parted ways upon arrival and Suru was taken by his contractor to his new employer, a man operating a two-room wholesale shop which cuts and folds sarees that are then distributed and sold in retail shops all over India. Suru explains that "Each shop has a false ceiling of plywood—that's where the workers cut and fold. It is a very congested environment. Sometimes when there were too many of us, we would work out on the street near the shop. Usually we would finish 2500-3000 sarees per day in groups of four workers." We ask him whether there has ever been a police raid on his shop and he says "Yes! It only happened once to me, but from my friends in Surat I know that it is common...It was very scary at the time. All of the young workers hid under sarees or ran away!" We ask him what happens to the employer and kids that are caught and he explains that the employer usually pays a fine or a bribe and the kids are sometimes taken away and sent back to their village.

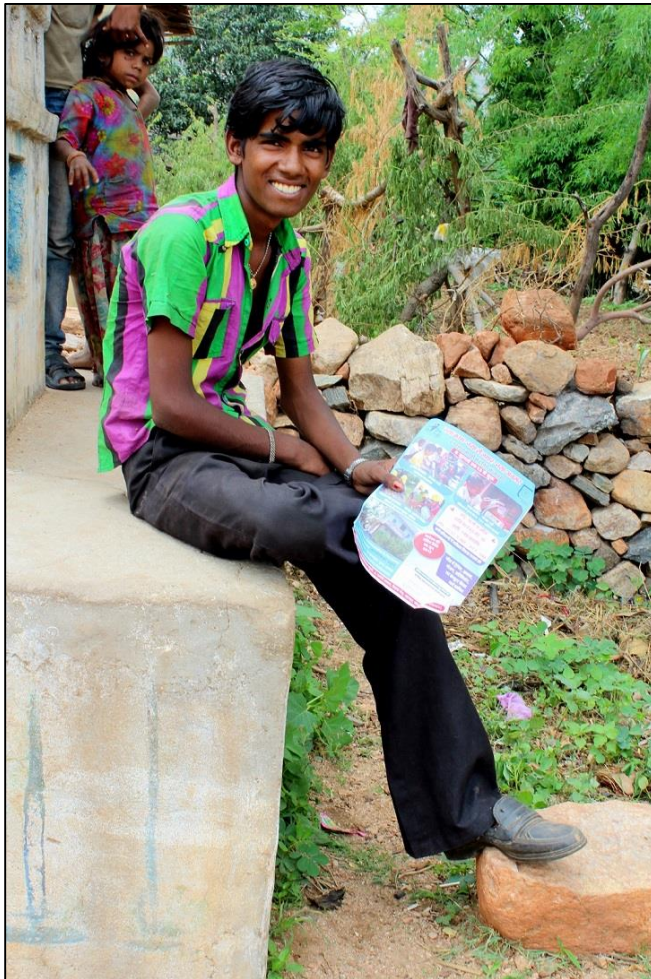
³⁸ After the interview, Sanjay told me that by the way he spoke about school and his teachers, he suspected that there had been some level of abuse.

"For the first couple of months I didn't like it very much, but then I adjusted and began to like it. The contractor who helped me find the job takes a lot of people from my community. We all lived together in rented rooms in a complex...about seven people live in a room. There is a common place for us all to eat and the contractor hired two cooks to feed us our meals." When we ask about his work hours he replies "I worked usually from 11am to 11pm, with lunch from 1pm to 1:30pm. We were allowed to leave for

festivals like Holi and Diwali and we even got one saree and 200 rupees as a bonus."

In the four years he worked in Surat, Suru tells us he worked for two different contracts and changed because he was offered a salary increase from 1,500 rs a month to 3,000 rs a month. Of the money he made, Suru kept 500rs each month for his "mobile charges and other expenses," and the rest went to his family. We ask him whether he plans to continue working in Surat and he tells us that he wants to begin working "here at home as a construction worker" because "it was not enough money to survive in Surat."

Finally, we ask what he would say to other young kids thinking about migrating to Surat and he says that he would tell them to stay in school until 8th standard "and then Surat is OK because you can be hired as a shop assistant and make more money. After Surat, if you are ready, you can try for construction work or farm work."



Suru on the outskirts of his village

Most migrants who do not belong in the "Student" category (migrating to earn money for school fees) are dropouts. Very few complete their high school education and then decide to migrate. The highest grade achieved by any of the migrants I interviewed was 10th grade. Few drop out, migrate, and return to school but it is not unheard of. The parents of dropouts typically had very little education themselves and so whether their child was failing his or her exams or simply did not like school, many (though definitely not all) encouraged or did not object to the discontinuation of their child's studies in favor of labor migration. The decision to abandon one's studies in favor of migrating for employment reflects the little to nonexistent tangible evidence rural youth in many developing countries have of the economic returns of

education. To many families, it becomes a waste of time and money³⁹ given their financial circumstances. Family poverty or the death, sickness, or retirement of a parent are also some of the factors affecting dropouts.

Pass hua toh zindabad. Fail hua toh Ahmedabad. People in Gurutaraj kept referencing this rhyme in regards to the intersection between education and child migration. Roughly translated it means, “If I pass, I’ll study forever. If I fail, I’ll go to Ahmedabad.” This mentality shows both the desire to be educated and how easy it is for students in rural public schools to fall behind in their studies. ST families especially expressed a strong desire for their children to go to school, but claimed that their family’s economic situation made this impossible. “First you must fill your belly. And the bellies of your brothers and sisters, if possible. Then you can study.”

Falling behind in school, failing exams, and dissatisfaction with the quality of education in general were major factors in the decision to migrate for 9/18 of my interviewees in Gurutaraj. These sentiments were mostly expressed by tribal families and migrants. A few Rajput migrants told me that school was going very well for them when they dropped out, but that they did not have the luxury of furthering their education as their families were in debt or in an otherwise difficult financial situation.

The school in Gurutaraj accommodates grades 1-10 and has only five teachers. Even with several combined-grade-level classes, there simply are not enough instructors to teach all of the students at once. Thus, some classes are instructed to “study independently” for large portions of the school day, or even for the whole day. With such large classroom sizes (some as big as 70 students) and so few teachers, many young children are getting increasingly discouraged and disenchanted with education, preferring to “be productive for their families” rather than unproductive at school. Further, in an area with so few employment opportunities, the economic returns of education are not so tangibly apparent, and thus not a powerful force in deterring dropouts.

For Suru, poor education quality, the example of the friend one year his senior, the fact that he has several younger siblings who will need money for education and other expenses, and potentially (though not explicitly) family poverty all converged to influence his decision to migrate. Out of school at the young age of 12, Suru’s physical limitations seemed to have kept local construction out of reach for the time being, and so Surat became the second-best option as it is the closest major hub for migrant workers from southern Rajasthan and because it has a thriving textile industry, an informal sector in which employers have few qualms about hiring young kids (Khare 2013). This particular case also includes a rare instance of recommending further education because it would increase one’s salary. This suggests that Suru might have made a different choice (perhaps stayed in school until 8th grade) if he had had complete

³⁹ School fees in both India and Togo are prohibitive, have to buy uniform, shoes and books (in addition to paying tuition) or you can’t go. Driver of dropouts and child migration. The requirement of school fees, even for public education can be ascribed to the effects of SAPs and the reduction of government spending on such social services (Explored in section 3.5).

information about his choices, but nonetheless it is clear that three years later he probably still would have migrated.

In terms of vulnerability, Suru might have been at higher risk than some of the previous migrants because he traveled with a contractor, an intermediary who was previously unknown to him. Evidence⁴⁰ I gathered from my interviews in India comparing work conditions and initial salary with type of intermediary suggests that the less personally one knows his or her intermediary, the more at risk they are of being cheated or exploited in some way. This, as I mentioned in the Introduction, is true for *wagas* in Togo as well. Even so, this particular contractor seems to have recruited heavily from Suru's community, so people might have been able to vouch for his moral character. Further, he was separated from his friend at destination, but the contractor made sure he lived with others from his community. Relative to some of the other profiles, Suru seems to have exercised particularly thin agency.

Although Suru only crossed state lines, had his contractor been apprehended by law enforcement, the Palermo Protocol⁴¹ might have been invoked because he is underage and the work he does in Surat is rather unambiguously exploitative. His consent is of no consequence. Under the WFCLC and its national version, raids and inspections do seem to occur in the textile market, but Suru's account of the one raid he experienced suggests that he was more scared of the police than anything--with kids running and hiding--hardly a scene of "rescue." Of course, he does not say whether his employers were telling them all to run and hide, or whether this was their instinct. Perhaps they themselves did not want to be identified and sent home to their villages. Suru was also partially affected by the age of compulsory education. Given that he dropped out of school after 5th standard, when one is about 12 years old, under the 2006 updated Indian Child Labor it would be illegal for him to be employed in *any* type of work. At age 14 his legal options are still limited to "soft labor."

The Adventurer

Kouwenam, one of the village's meneusiers, or carpenters, comes over to my homestead one day to fix the lock on the door to my room. When I ask him where he learned this trade, for which he is known in Kpagouda, he responds "Nigeria. The second time" and so begins our informal interview. He tells me, "the first time I 'went on adventure' I was 16 and I went with a small group of kids to the South of Togo, near the Ghanaian border, to cultivate yams and maiz for about six months for some Kabre there." The next time he migrated for work, however, was to Benin at age 18 "because the South of Togo is a bit poor" and he could make more money in Benin, 7,000CFA for a carré⁴², as opposed to only 6,000CFA in the South.

⁴⁰ Figure 7 in in Appendix

⁴¹ Or the national version of it, the new Criminal Law Amendments Act of 2013 ("India" 2013).

⁴² ¼ hectare. Measures 25 meters squared.

He tells me that to get to Benin, he and another group of boys he was leading this time walked to the Togolese/Beninese border⁴³ and from there took a hired taxi to the city of Djougou. When I ask him whether he has ever encountered any difficulties at the border, he laughs and says “No, no. it is very easy to use bush roads to get past the border police, but if they catch you, it’s nothing a bribe cannot fix....”

Kouwenam and the other boys’ journey to Benin took about one day and cost a total of 2,500CFA, which the family that employed them to cultivate their fields paid on their behalf. Of this family he says, “In Benin I formed a close relationship with the family I was working for. They were Logba⁴⁴ and very good and in Benin they feed you and house you without taking from your payments...I made between 160,000 CFA and 200,000 CFA in the six months. Yes, Benin is very good. On peut se débrouiller⁴⁵” (Hashim and Thorsten 2011, 125-126).

When I ask about Nigeria, on the other hand, he says that “the work there is very difficult. Wagas from Nigeria usually put you with Chocosi⁴⁶ families and we have to build our own shelters out in the fields, even cook for ourselves after the long days of cultivating...I like Benin more, but one has to take opportunities as they come. I was young and I also wanted to see Nigeria.”

In total, Kouwenam had migrated to southern Togo for work four times, to Benin more than three times, and to Nigeria twice. In a follow-up interview conducted by Professor



Kouwenam and the children of the family for whom he worked in Benin

Charles Piot, we discover what another big motivation behind all of this labor was. Kouwenam was asked “why are young people so addicted to l’aventure?” He responded that “The impulse comes from within. Maybe you want to construct a home here, but you don’t have money. I wanted to get married too.” Piot expands on this and explains to us that young men in this society “need bridewealth in order to marry. One has to by

⁴³ The border is only 18 km away from Kpagouda, following the road to the nearby town of Kutao and to the official border crossing station, and about 12 km away if one takes a direct route on foot to avoid the border authorities, as many migrants do.

⁴⁴ Of the Logba ethnic group, so they spoke Kabiye like Kouwenam and the other boys.

⁴⁵ Roughly, one can manage or get by. (Hashim and Thorsen 2011, 125-126)

⁴⁶ Primarily Muslim, Yoruba-speaking ethnic group in southwest Nigeria. Near the city of Kisi

palm oil, sulum⁴⁷, baobab seeds, European beer, corn, give money, or some combination thereof.” Kouwenam worked hard to get enough money to buy building materials to build a house and attract the woman that is now his wife. At the time of this interview, their first child was not yet a year old. Kouwenam said, “People used to go and stay in the South. Now they go to Nigeria or Benin and try to build a life here. I can work here and provide for my family now with the carpentering I learned in Nigeria.”

The adventurer is similar to the runaway, but with potentially different motivations, intergenerational relationships, and levels of community acceptance. Typically the decision to migrate for the adventurer aligns with the individual’s desire to travel and have new experiences, but also the social value of the act of migration itself—as a coming-of-age statement, or as a strategy to accumulate wealth, and thus, luxury items to showcase and gain status from, along with one’s newfound knowledge of the world. The adventurer, more so than the runaway, usually intends to return to his or her village.

In India, there were many legacies, and as I have said, Gurutaraj and southern Rajasthan in general had a high rate and longstanding tradition of circular labor migration, at least among males. This has normalized labor migration to an extent, so even if children do run away, this might be devastating at the familial level, but the community might not be moved one way or the other, taking it as a fact of life and assuming the boy will return sooner or later to start a life in the village. In Togo, however, traditional migration, as I explained in the introduction, was always from northern to southern Togo, but the new popular destinations to Benin and Nigeria have elicited heated responses from adults and other leaders in the community. Parents I interviewed protested that this younger generation only cared about making quick money and buying flashy things like motorcycles, cell phones, and new sound systems. Fearing the unknown and fearing for the safety of their children abroad, they asserted that it is better for one to stay and cultivate in Kpagouda, or to make money in nearby towns—“even though it is not as much as one could make in Benin or Nigeria, it is enough to *faire la rentrée*,” one mother told me. Another parent conceded that employment nearby is hard to come by, and that if one can earn more abroad and if there is no money for school if the child does not go earn, it is hard to deny youth the opportunity. The village chief blamed the youth for foolishly leaving to chase an illusion of *l’aventure*. He said that more often than not they returned empty-handed to a village less able to feed them than when they left (because their families suddenly lacked their labor power). Each migrant, parent, village leader, and NGO worker has his or her own opinion of youth migration, colored by the narratives that have directly touched their lives, and it’s hard to tell whether this new phenomenon of international migration has been mostly beneficial or mostly detrimental to the community and families involved, especially with a discourse so indicative of a generation divide.

L’aventure is a powerful motivator. Young men and women dream of returning home with tin for their family’s roofs, electronics, and other indicators of social wealth. The allure of

⁴⁷ The local sorghum beer

l'aventure goes back to the allure of the modern, of technology, of life outside the small village these youth call home. Leaving for Nigeria carries the connotation that one will see the world, learn new languages, experience different culture, and perhaps touch modernity if working in a bigger town or city, “[when you migrate outside of Togo] you have seen more of the world and might even be able to speak another language! Others come to respect you.” Such sentiments were expressed by migrants in India as well. One in particular said, “People admire those who go to Surat, they come back and their whole demeanor is different, their clothes, the way they walk, the way they talk. It’s enticing.” This anecdotal evidence suggests that apart from the material wealth ideally accumulated through labor migration, the act migration itself has tremendous social value, which has proven to be another source of motivation.

Though I did not gain an insight into Kouwenam’s original motivations for migration at age 16, or whether this decision was made with or without his parents, he showed agency not only through choice, but through strategy. He seemed to have gained experience migrating to the south and to Benin with groups of other boys from the village, even leading a few. Working with *wagas*, one always runs the risk of being cheated out of one’s fair wages. And even though at one point he ended up in Nigeria despite its reputation of rough conditions and back-breaking labor because one has to “take opportunities as they come,” indicating constrained agency, he ended up making enough money to finance an apprenticeship. His accumulated wealth allowed him to build a home in the village and attract his wife, and his new skill enables him to work locally and make a decent living.

Kouwenam’s legal considerations are very similar to those of François. As he was around 16-18 years old when he first migrated and first migrated out of the country, the difference between “victim of trafficking” under the Palermo Protocol and “trafficker of children” hung precariously close. Further, the illegality of the movement of minors for the purpose of employment that is deemed exploitative necessitates evading normal channels of migration, forcing Kouwenam and the other boys to travel through potentially dangerous “bush roads.” Kouwenam also mentions that the family that ends up employing him usually pays for transportation on his behalf. If your ability to pay for transportation necessitates reaching destination and you get turned back, you may have a serious issue with the *moto* or taxi you hired and these confrontations always have the potential to turn violent. This shows that in the name of protecting child migrants from what lies ahead of them, they are turned back and sometimes that itself puts them at risk for other types of abuses.

The Girl

“Kafara? Anyone home?” Jesper, my translator, and I had come to a homestead near the center of Kpagouda to interview a young woman named Chilalo. Unlike in India, in Togo the results of the household survey I conducted showed that girls were migrating in near equal number as boys from this village, but they work very different jobs at destination. Instead of primarily cultivation, young girls who leave their villages in Togo often work as domestic servants or bonage, at small shops, or in bars. Because work in bars in some cases has led to selling sex for extra money, it seemed that most girls were wary about talking about their migratory experiences at all, even if they hadn’t worked in bars. We hoped that Chilalo might feel comfortable enough to speak candidly with us.

We spot the corner of a green and blue pagne⁴⁸ move behind the curtain covering the otherwise open doorway and soon Chilalo emerged with a baby on her hip. She smiled coyly and led us into the courtyard, which was completely shaded from the sun by an enormous mango tree. We sit on a bench at the base of the tree and ask her if she would be willing to share her experience with us or comment on girls' migration from Kpagouda in general.

She starts by telling us about two friends of hers who both dropped out of school because they could no longer pay for their studies. The first, recently orphaned, left for Benin at 15 years old and has been working there for two years as a barmaid. Chilalo tells us that "her plan was to make enough money to pay for an apprenticeship and then move back here." The second friend is currently 17 years old, like Chilalo, and has been working in Benin for just under a year selling food in small restaurants and on the road.

As for her own experience, Chilalo told us that she first left for Benin when she was 16. "My father had just passed away and there was no one to provide for the family, so I decided to leave my studies to go get money for my younger brother and sister's education." She met a "grande soeur⁴⁹" who was recruiting girls for domestic work in Benin and secured a job. The soeur paid for transportation for Chilalo and one other girl who made the journey with her, but the two ended up working in different houses.

She began working in the household of two civil servants with two children. "From 5am to 12pm I would do the dishes, sweep, prepare breakfast for the family, and get the children ready for school by bathing them. Around 4pm I would bring the children home from school, make the family dinner, and go to sleep around 9pm. "Work was very difficult. I could have stayed another year, but I do not think that I could have negotiated a higher wage." The soeur had pre-negotiated her salary of 10,000CFA (\$21 USD) a month, so Chilalo tells us that she did not know at the time if she took a cut of her pay or not. She tells us that later on she found out that other domestic workers were making 15,000CFA or more. The family provided food, but toiletries and any other personal items she had to buy with her salary, but what she had left over she would send back in the form of cash or notebooks and other school supplies with people she knew who were returning to Kpagouda or nearby village.

In the time that she has been back, Chilalo got married and had a child. Her husband is currently in Nigeria working as a cultivator for a Muslim family there. As far as her plans for the future, she tells us that she "would like to resume her studies next year when her son is a little bit older and her husband comes back.

⁴⁸ A traditional patterned cloth used as skirts and other things.

⁴⁹ Translates to "big sister"

Female migrants are particularly constrained by gender norms. Ideas about what kind of work is proper for a female to do, or not, means that there are very different employment options available to girls. In Rajasthan women might only migrate to nearby Kherlumbar for day labor and in Kpagouda girls are limited to certain jobs like domestic labor. Females are under-represented in these profiles for several reasons. In India, as I have mentioned, I did not identify a single female who had migrated out of state. This is partially because female autonomy is especially restricted in a more conservative state like Rajasthan. In Togo, at first it seemed to me that I was only



Chilalo (far left) and a few of the other migrant girls I interviewed in Togo

finding male migrants because many more boys were migrating than girls, but as Chilalo and her friends and François and his sisters indicate, boys and girls migrate in close to equal numbers from Kpagouda—perhaps with slightly more male migrants. The reason it seems as if fewer girls leave the village to work in Benin and Nigeria is because the nature of the work they fall into at destination is very different from the work that boys do, and often has a negative connotation, so it is not widely spoken about.

The men in this region of northern Togo are some of the best cultivators in the country. Their skills (and cheap labor) are in high demand in Benin and Nigeria, and cultivation is by far the most common sector of employment for male migrants there, though some may also migrate to begin an apprenticeship in a trade such as carpentry. Since these young men also cultivate for their families and for their community when they are at home in Kpagouda, this type of work is part of the landscape, part of their history, and part of the village community. Thus, the work they do abroad is frequently discussed as they and their elders compare the soil conditions, techniques, tools, and so on to those of Kpagouda.

By contrast, girls end up either working in bars or working in households as domestic servants, with the majority (roughly 60%) ending up in bars, a job not at all common for a female in Kpagouda. There are other possibilities, such as working as a phone booth operator

or working in a boutique⁵⁰, but often these migrant women have little say in their work placement, especially if they have a “bad” or self-interested *waga* who only wants to make money off of their labor.

Work as a barmaid often turns into sex work after hours. A girl’s employer can threaten to kick her out if she does not sleep with him or his customers. In Nigeria this would mean being alone in an unfamiliar country, facing a language barrier and having no means of getting back, so she has little choice. The sad truth about sex labor is known and heavily stigmatized back in the village, meaning that few girls are comfortable talking about their experiences, especially since some are rumored to have been infected with HIV/AIDS while abroad.

Girls are more likely to work spread out in different bars or houses even if they are recruited together. Work conditions in homes are not typically dangerous, but the girls might experience verbal or physical abuse, almost always work unfairly long hours, and the labor is very arduous—they cook for all members of the family, clean, tend to children, run errands, and more.

In bars the work is a little bit more dangerous, but the hours are a little bit shorter, depending on the informal sex work done after hours. Bars are also more profitable because the sex work adds “tips” to a salary already comparable to domestic labor. Girls predominantly go to Benin, though many go to Nigeria. Girls in both Benin and Nigeria are paid in cash each month, but they might also bring back goods like *pagnes*, dishware, and other household goods. A girl working in a home might receive 10,000-20,000 CFA (\$21-\$42 USD) a month while a girl working in a bar would receive at least 15,000CFA a month plus tips.

Although it was Chilalo’s decision to migrate, it was a decision heavily influenced by the death of her father and the idea that it was her duty as the eldest to provide for her younger siblings, or the family would risk falling deeply into poverty. As far as vulnerability, she was at the mercy of a *soeur* who may not have placed her in a bar, but may have cheated her out of a fair wage. Chilalo was able to finance the schooling of her brother and sister, but she must now find a way to make ends meet while her husband is away and has to bear the stigma of a girl who migrated, a girl who may be lying about working as a domestic servant because she wants to cover up her sex work. Chilalo definitely exhibits “thin” or constrained agency.

Households, like farms, are unlikely to be inspected for underage or mistreated domestic servants, so the chances of Chilalo being affected by a raid in the name of the WFCLC or the national child labor laws were very slim. However, with the death of her father, her family and younger siblings especially needed her added income. If she and the *soeur* were caught trying to cross the border into Benin and turned back, it is likely that Chilalo would have tried to migrate again soon after, perhaps more desperate and more willing to accept any employment, even as a barmaid.

⁵⁰ Boutiques look a lot like bars, but sell no alcohol.

2.6 Why Acknowledge “Thin” Agency?

At the end of the discussion of each profile, aligning legal instruments like the CRC, the WFCLC and the Palermo Protocol examined in Chapter 1 with the realities of individuals they implicate should again call into question normative understandings of childhood and labor. These six migrants came from very different circumstances. Their agency was constrained to varying degrees, they were vulnerable to varying degrees, and not all were great “success” stories (as shown in Table 1). However, my argument is not that child migration invariably yields great success. These six stories are meant to illustrate how the policies currently in place would not help kids in these positions, but rather leave them unchanged or worse-off.

Migrant Profiles, Agency, and the Law

Name	“Type” of Migrant	Factors at Play	Agency Rank ⁵¹	Pertinent Laws	Laws Invoked?	Outcome of Migration ⁵²
Abhimanyu	The Runaway	Inter-generational conflict, Low agricultural productivity	1	WFCLC, 2006 Indian Child Labor Ban, Palermo Protocol	None	Favorable
Tejpal	The Legacy	Retirement of breadwinner, Pride, Duty, Expectation, Bridewealth	3	Palermo Protocol	None	Neutral to Favorable
François	The Student	Cost of Education, family poverty	4	WFCLC, Palermo Protocol, 2005 Togolese Child Trafficking Law, Beninese Immigration Law	None	Favorable
Suru	The Dropout	Poor quality of education, birth order, family poverty, peer example, few accessible local employment opportunities, lack of information	5	WFCLC, 2006 Indian Child Labor Ban, Age of Compulsory Education, Palermo Protocol.	2006 Indian Child Labor Ban (prompted a police raid of his place of employment, but he was not taken away.)	Unfavorable to Neutral
Kouwenam	The Adventurer	Social value of migration, bridewealth, few local employment opportunities	2	WFCLC, Palermo Protocol, 2005 Togolese Child Trafficking Law	None	Favorable

⁵¹ I applied a proxy measure of agency I devised in India (see Table 2 in Appendix) that considers age of first migration, highest level of education completed, whether the parents knew he or she was migrating, whose decision the migration was, and what type of intermediary, to each migrant. Clearly this method cannot provide statistically accurate data, especially with a small sample size, but even if agency is not easily measured, these indicators can be used to rank these child migrants in terms of agency and at the very least compare them to each other.

⁵² This designation came from a combination of the migrant’s economic situation post migration (whether salary went up or down, whether they were able to save, and whether they were able to pay for something as a direct result of money made through migration) and the migrant’s personal satisfaction with his or her situation post-migration as compared to pre-migration (Was a goal accomplished, such as paying for school or a wedding? Was there a valuable experience had—adventure, mentoring, camaraderie?).

Chilalo	The Girl	Death of breadwinner, birth order, family poverty, gender norms	6	WFCLC, Palermo Protocol, 2005 Togolese Child Trafficking Law	None	Unfavorable to Neutral
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Table 1

The laws, if invoked directly, would have mislabeled several of these child migrants as victims of trafficking and child labor, even if they sought out employment out of their own volition and/or necessity. In most cases these legal instruments meant to protect the child would have done these particular migrants more harm than good—imposing financial, social, and psychological costs. There is the loss of employment and the dilemma of finding a new job that Suru might have faced had he been caught in the raid. The illegality of both movement and employment, if enforced, would have put many of these children in worse situations because border police might then demand heftier bribes of students like François or more dangerous routes would have been necessary to avoid them. Even less honest intermediaries than Chilalo’s would be the ones willing to take the risk of transporting minors against the law (Hashim and Thorsen 2011, 78).

Although Table 1 might suggest that agency is correlated with more favorable outcomes, this method is far from a precise measure of agency or success, both of which are highly subjective concepts. Even taking a seemingly less biased indicator of success, such as salary at destination, one can see in the scatter plot (*Figure 8* in Appendix) that salary was not positively correlated with the migrant’s agency “score” in the study I conducted.

All six child migrants examined in the profiles chose to migrate, though their reasoning and motivations differed. However, given that the agency of a majority of these was characterized by at least a small measure of structural constraint, why should we acknowledge this “thin” agency at all? Since these children are making decisions that have the potential to harm them in various ways and end in unfavorable outcomes, doesn’t society face a moral imperative to protect them from themselves? Faced with this ethical dilemma, Glover contends that utilitarian arguments that rely on the fact that a choice has been made and maintain that that is sufficient “may not be valid if one is to adopt a moral stance” (Glover 1995, 123; cited in Hashim and Thorsen 2011, 118). Essentially the question becomes, if these children are consenting to exploitation, can considering their free will be morally justified?

To fail to do this, to disregard and undermine the agency, however thin, that child migrants have managed to carve out for themselves in the face of tremendous adversity would amount to a double-victimization, a new manifestation of structural violence. After all, “it is very difficult to prescribe whether or not a choice as a ‘good one’, since any assessment of individuals’ choices necessarily entails bringing in an alternative normative standpoint, a set of values other than the child’s. A key question, then, is to what extent does this normative standpoint express values that are relevant to the reality it seeks to evaluate” (Kabeer 1999, 458)? In other words, the child’s own personal values must be consulted before it is decided whether a choice is “good” or in his or her best interest.

Policymakers, child-rights activists, researchers, and other relevant actors and institutions are faced with a paradox—a population they have a responsibility to that is to varying degrees vulnerable to exploitation and to varying degrees autonomous and resilient. Policy in particular must grapple with the question of whether to protect or support these child migrants. The longstanding propensity for protection privileges the notion of the “best interest of the child” over the child’s “participatory rights,” two provisions of the CRC that often come into conflict. “Other criticisms of the CRC are that it has trivialized certain rights” such as the child’s right to empowerment in favor of “the entitlement to government protection and services” (Ansell 2005; Ennew et al. 2005). I maintain that the child should be empowered to make this choice between which of his or her rights he or she would like to give more weight to, given his or her personal circumstances, and I advocate for a theoretical and policy shift toward the support rather than strictly the protection of child migrants.

To accomplish this, policymakers need to consider the possibility of children’s agency, even if it exists in tandem with different levels of vulnerability that must also be addressed. Who are the current policymakers or policymaking entities? At what levels do they operate? What are their current strategies and how can they create effective policy that is nuanced enough to address the blurred lines of “thin” agency?

To address these questions, in Chapter 3 I will turn from the three main international conventions I introduced in Chapter 1 and applied in Chapter 2. I will instead highlight the most commonly used interventions to child labor and child trafficking, borne of the aforementioned laws and implemented by national governments, non-governmental groups, and occasionally local people. I will explore the underlying reasons why each type of existing intervention largely fails to benefit independent migrant children, drawing a parallel from the development of these children to the “development” of the low-income countries they are predominantly found in. I will reference several historical examples in which Western reactions to perceived human rights abuses and top-down “solutions” to poverty, much like top-down “solutions” to child labor and child trafficking, have produced at best ineffective and at worst disastrous results. Finally, I will discuss the importance of grassroots, bottom-up movements as an alternative that privilege local knowledge and are supported, but not influenced (passively or actively) by outside forces.

Chapter 3: Critical Policy Review- Existing Interventions and the importance of local knowledge

The WFCLC, the CRC, the Palermo Protocol, and other international legislation may seem far removed from the lives of migrant children at the local or village level, but the effects of these laws and the ideas they impose *can* nevertheless be felt at every level of global society⁵³. Designed at the highest level by the leaders of the UN, ILO, UNDP, IOM and other IGOs, these laws in turn influenced national and regional policy, putting pressure on local governments to change their official age of compulsory education, child labor laws, child trafficking legislation,⁵⁴ the age of majority,⁵⁵ and other legal standards. At the level of NGOs, many organizations, even if they are operated entirely by local people (as Aajeevika Bureau is), require foreign financial backing and often must succumb (to some degree) to foreign agendas in order to receive this financial support.⁵⁶ Alternatively, these organizations might purposely or inadvertently propagate Western ideals through “awareness campaigns” in cases where they are run by the local elite who may be Western-educated. Descending one more level it would seem that there are few to no true “bottom-up” grassroots efforts that conceive and carry out independent interventions relating to child migration. Thus, the normative ideas that frame even international statutes penned in Geneva can trickle down to the meso and micro levels of regional and local policy in countries such as Togo and India, prompting the implementation of certain types of preconceived, pre-packaged interventions that are often not a good fit for independent child migrants.

3.1 Existing Interventions

By analyzing primary documents detailing anti-TIP efforts in other countries through the lens of the U.S. Department of State (US Embassy Cables), by reviewing numerous IGO reports on the policies of different countries’ strategies at the national, NGO, and village/local levels (*Measures to Combat Trafficking* 2006), and through my own fieldwork experience I have identified the following as the main policies and intervention strategies employed to combat trafficking of children and child labor, separated by stage in the migration cycle. Almost none of these are supportive measures that would help independent child migrants on their journeys. Instead, these policies are all based on interdiction by law, reducing the number of mobile youth by engaging them or their families directly (“raising awareness” and offering alternatives like rural employment, education, and skills-training), the reduction of mobile youth by galvanizing and training people to stop them (police and village committees), and finally the reversal of youth mobility through repatriation and reintegration. I will now explore each of

⁵³ See examples in section 1.4.

⁵⁴ Sovereign states such as Malaysia bowed unwillingly to pressure from the US TIP Program and passed new anti-trafficking legislation, as I detailed in a subsection of 1.4- “The U.S. TIP Report.”

⁵⁵ A reference to section 1.2, in which Namibia felt compelled to “harmonize” its laws with the international standards of the CRC.

⁵⁶ A reference to a subsection of 1.4- “Funding Politics and Local Actors” in which my supervisor at Aajeevika Bureau tells me the Bureau’s reason for not training children under age 18.

these strategies in sections separated into government interventions, NGO and IGO interventions, joint interventions, and grassroots movements.

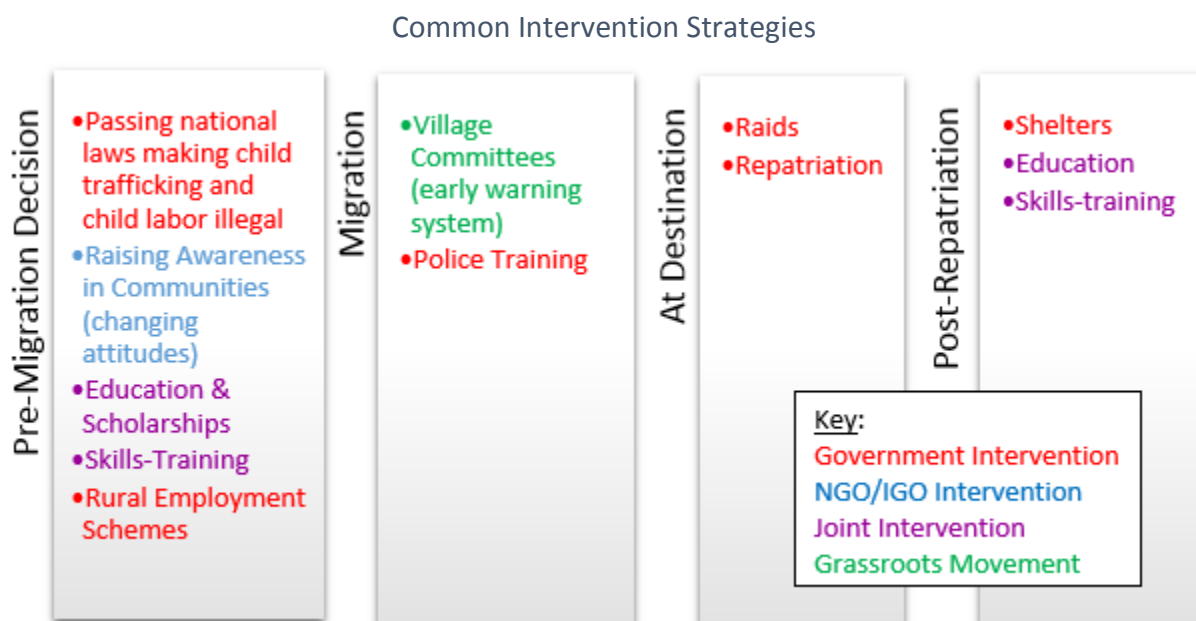


Figure 4

3.2 Top-down Government Interventions

Rural Employment Schemes

We have already addressed the laws of interdiction in the two previous chapters, so the next type of common government intervention is rural employment schemes. Due to low agricultural productivity, caused in part by climate change, a scarcity of sustainable local employment, and because small rural villages have thus virtually emptied except for the very young and the very old, one major pre-migration strategy national governments have employed is rural employment schemes. The foremost example⁵⁷ exists in India and is called the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA). Instituted in September 2005, this program has been praised for its success in providing “for the enhancement of livelihood security of the households in rural areas of the country by providing at least one hundred days of guaranteed wage employment in every financial year to every household” under a rights-based framework (International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth 2009, 7).

While it is true that MGNREGA has “augmented employment, increased family income, included marginalized groups, and stemmed distress migration” to an extent, there are a few reasons why it has not significantly impacted youth migration (International Policy Centre for Inclusive Growth 2009, 11-23). First, from the migrants I interviewed in Kherlumbur Block, it was apparent that even eight years after the MGNREGA went into effect it had not reached everyone who needed it. One migrant man who had returned to the village from Ahmedabad told me that there is “No MGNREGA here. I know about it but there have not been any projects starting for two years. And the pay is not enough at all.” Indeed, MGNREGA guarantees 100

⁵⁷ In terms of the number of beneficiaries, MGNREGA is also the “largest and most ambitious social security, public works,” and rural employment guarantee program in the world (Ministry of Rural Development 2005).

days of employment *per household*. As a result, people in the village say that “young people are still going to Ahmedabad for work. It is women and old men who work MGNREGA projects in the village.” Further, even if the youth did want to stay and work MGNREGA projects, perhaps while continuing their education, no one under the age of 18 is permitted to work on these projects. Lastly, although the program was set up to be transparent, it has nevertheless been plagued by corruption, and the meager salaries that might have been earned by villagers involved in these government projects like building bridges and roads instead have lined the pockets of the middlemen and project supervisors (“Reported Corruption in MGNREGA”).

Police Training

In order to stop youth and their intermediaries before they cross borders or reach destination, governments combatting TIP worldwide have been encouraged to allocate funds for training law enforcement officials to identify trafficked children and take appropriate action. There is evidence to suggest, however, that this training is often of poor quality, poorly funded, or both. From Mozambique, one embassy cable mentions that, “Enforcement remedies generally are adequate in the formal sectors, but remain poor in the regulation of informal child labor. The Labor Inspectorate and police force lack adequate staff, funds, and training to investigate child labor cases, especially in areas outside the capital, where many cases occur...there is no specialized child labor training for the Labor Inspectorate” (Embassy Maputo 2009, 09MAPUTO41). Even so, Leigh Campoamor’s dissertation on child street laborers in Peru indicates that even when there is specialized child labor training given to local authorities, pressure from NGOs aiming to eradicate child labor in this particular context led to labor monitors patrolling the streets for hawkers when their training was designed for factory raids (Campoamor 2012).

Similar accounts point out that police have not been given adequate training to be able to identify victims of trafficking and child labor. It is hard to imagine a way in which the situation with police and labor inspectorates in these low-income countries would benefit independent child migrants. Because law enforcement officials are not equipped to properly handle cases that involve children and the informal sector, it is likely that even if they did manage a formal inspection of the informal labor sector, a raid, or an attempt at repatriation, the child would likely not get linked to the resources he or she would need. He or she would simply be out of a job, perhaps far from home. Lastly, even if sufficient funds were allocated to quality training, it is doubtful that police would be trained in a way that would allow for the consideration independent child migrants. It is more likely that they would be told to treat every child as a victim or potential victim.

The quality of law enforcement when it comes to cases of child labor and child trafficking is further affected by corruption, and from experience I can say that the way it “plagues the police and gendarmes” is not unique to Madagascar (Embassy Antananarivo 2007, 07ANTANANARIVO161). On our way to Benin from Kpagouda with Kouwenam as our guide, we got to see the corruption of border officials first-hand. Everyone except Kouwenam had visas and the proper paperwork to cross the border, but it turned out to be nothing a 500CFA bribe couldn’t fix, for Kouwenam cheerfully rejoined our group five minutes later on the other side.

Raids, Repatriation, & Shelters

At destination, government interventions turn to primarily raids of employers suspected of hiring child labor and subsequent repatriation. It is not uncommon for “rescued” victims to be left “even more destitute” because they are left without employment (Embassy Antananarivo 2008, 08ANTANANARIVO440). National geographic reported on an updated Indian child labor law in 2006 which banned most forms of “soft labor” that had previously been left out of such regulations (“Child Labor Banned in India” 2010). A photographer captures a shot of a weeping seven-year-old named Salaj Mohammed Kasim during a raid on a Mumbai embroidery workshop and the reporter states that “many children are worried about the financial implications of the law...the 80 rupees (about U.S. \$2) that a child working in the city may make in a day can be crucial to the survival of the family back home.” This was the case for one child that was interviewed, Rama Chandran, 13, who “sends money home to his widowed mother and three younger siblings. He says ‘if I didn’t send money home, they would starve’” (“Child Labor Banned in India” 2010). Raids might, in theory, be the appropriate action for young children like Chandran who are clearly under enormous agentive constraints, even if he is working willingly, but “social workers caution that sufficient safeguards have not been put in place to protect children who could find themselves homeless as a result of the new law” (ibid.). Without the proper infrastructure for reintegration of the child migrant backing the law, including measures that would address his or her reasons for migrating and working in the first place, interventions like employer raids of little use and might do more harm than good. Suru’s story of his experience in a raid and the experiences of others in that textile market in Mumbai exhibit how police and inspectors in this capacity are also prone to corruption, often taking bribes in exchange for “tips” to employers of underage workers about when there will be a raid.

Not enough focus is placed on the sending regions, the places that export child laborers, or on identifying and addressing the community characteristics that fuel this phenomenon. This may be because offices of labor inspection typically already exist for the formal labor sector, so it is a matter of giving additional training to current employees, while a whole new agency might need to be created to explore the sources of child labor, a much more expensive and complicated process, especially when there is any kind of political inertia.

In all, top-down government interventions, including simply passing laws that make child trafficking and child labor illegal, often fail because they do not take into account children’s agency, their specific circumstances, or their reasons for migrating. Some of these things are not done because certain government agencies are under-funded and/or not well-coordinated with others that might have competing jurisdiction.

3.3 NGO/IGO Interventions

Raising Awareness/Changing attitudes

In addition to many joint interventions which I will highlight in the next section, NGOs like Terre des Hommes, Care International, Anti-Slavery International, religious organizations such as International Catholic Bureau for Children and IGOs like UNICEF, IOM, and UNDP often sponsor campaigns to “raise awareness” in communities about the perils of child trafficking and child labor, among other issues like health, education, and gender equality. In theory, it is good that these groups are engaging local communities, but when the main themes turn out to be “don’t sell your children,” this relationship can become problematic (Embassy Antananarivo 2007, 07ANTANANARIVO557). Especially in West Africa, where the practice of fostering and these “fluid families” are widespread, Western organizations looking into child trafficking adopted the stance that uninformed or negligent parents were unintentionally selling their children to traffickers thinking that they were sending them to live with relatives elsewhere. The core message of these “sustained sensitization programs” that was spread is that “parents must learn to be responsible for children until they are adults and to get away from the idea that sending them to the ‘Big City’ will lead to their better future” (Embassy Abuja 2003, 03ABUJA515). Again, while it is a good sign that these organizations are in dialogue with local communities, these “awareness-raising” campaigns risk offending communities by suggesting that traditional practices like fostering are bad and/or that parents are completely naïve or complicit to the sale of their own children (ibid.).

In short, the major pitfall of this type of intervention is that it is simplistic and often blames these communities for allowing something to happen without considering the structural issues in place that produce these outcomes. “Government and international TIP programs that focus on awareness-raising initiatives,” though potentially effective in the short term, have little long-term benefit because they are “not accompanied by parallel efforts to address the root of the problem—the lack of economic alternatives” (Embassy Antananarivo 2007, 07ANTANANARIVO161). Local leaders in Madagascar pointed out that “Everyone has had awareness-raising. Plenty of NGOs have been doing that. At this point we need economic alternatives even more...these campaigns and even initiatives to root out corruption will go nowhere if residents continue to struggle to make ends meet every day” (ibid.). Even if a campaign is culturally sensitive, the lack of economic opportunities and sheer poverty of these communities prevent awareness-raising interventions from achieving their full potential.

3.4 Joint Interventions

Education/scholarships, skills/vocational training, and shelters

Education and scholarship initiatives, subsidized skills or vocational training, and shelters are all initiatives undertaken by both government agencies and NGOs/IGOs and each has the potential to be, and occasionally is, very effective. In communities where “educational options are few and costly, scholarships are sorely needed if children are to continue their education” (Embassy Antananarivo 2007, 07ANTANANARIVO161). The same can be said about

apprenticeships and skills- training. From my own experience working at Aajeevika Bureau's STEP Academy and tracking down past trainees for an impact assessment of training, I can attest that these young migrants greatly benefitted from their low-cost training and for the most part have experienced significant increases in job opportunities and salary.

Because these initiatives are often tackled by entities at all levels (government, NGO, and IGO), there is often a good amount of inefficiency that comes from lack of communication and coordination of resources. Success would require supremely efficient inter-agency cooperation so that jurisdictions do not conflict. Also, in low-income countries governments might put less resources into initiatives that are already being heavily financed by the international community. This is effective until countries begin to rely on foreign aid in certain capacities (Embassy Antananarivo 2008, 08ANTANANARIVO164). Because the international and NGO community does not have unlimited funding or the political authority to make an expansive impact, the issues often remain unresolved.

Further, children who are approached with these opportunities either pre or post-migration are often not given the choice between them. For some like Suru and Abhimanyu, education is no longer something they wish to pursue, but it might be determined to be in their "best interest." Even if there were a fully-funded, streamlined system for putting "rescued children" (like these two might have been) into the care of some sort of program, these initiatives typically offer education, not skills-training, and place kids in local schools at destination. Suru and Abhimanyu had already decided that they did not want to continue their education; they wanted to earn money. It is doubtful that either would have stayed in such a program. It is more likely that they would have left and tried to find another job. Ultimately, if an intervention does not coincide with the child's needs or wants, or align with his or her personal values, it will fail.

3.5 West knows best - problematic parallels between "save the children!" and "development" discourses

Some of the interventions detailed above, especially raids and repatriation, police training, and awareness-raising have been unsuccessful in helping independent child migrants because they are geared toward victims of child trafficking and child labor and aim to save rather than support. This gestures back to the problematic language of victimization and general disregard for children's agency discussed in Chapters 1 and 2, and it is an important part of the reality of independent child migration today. Even so, there is more to this story. All of the other recurring reasons for failure—corruption, the absence of key social services and infrastructure, under-funded government agencies and a general lack of financial backing for these initiatives—share the same root cause. Poverty, or economic under-development. On the side of the national government, poverty inhibits the successful implementation of otherwise promising initiatives like rural employment schemes or educational scholarships. On the side of the child labor migrant, poverty and the need to earn money for various reasons often overrides any awareness-raising efforts, or scholarships that might have been offered, for

example. As long as economic insecurity persists at national, community, and household levels, child labor migration and its potentially negative outcomes cannot be stopped.

It is important to realize that the limitations that poverty creates⁵⁸ are not naturally-occurring in the “third world,” just as the wealth of “first world” countries did not organically come about. To explain the root of these constraints, I will begin by drawing a parallel between child labor migrants and the low-income countries that they are predominantly found in. In the West, a child is considered to be in the process of developing into an adult, just as poor countries are often referred to as “developing” countries. The word “developing,” however, is problematic when applied to countries because it assumes that these nations will one day become “developed” and eventually join the ranks of Norway, Australia, the United States and the Netherlands in the top tier⁵⁹ of the UNDP Human Development Report (Malik 2003). It also invokes the dominant, Western psychology of development in which there is a “natural,” linear trajectory from infancy to adulthood (Bluebond-Langner and Korbin 2007, 242). In this model of development, it would seem that as long as an infant is continuously fed and protected, it naturally develops and becomes an adult. When this idea is applied to countries, it belies the fact that the “development” of Western countries, especially former colonial powers, was anything but natural. Mahatma Gandhi is said to have asked,⁶⁰ “If it took the whole world of the British Empire to “develop” tiny England, how many worlds would it take to develop India?” He meant of course that the United Kingdom is rich today because it was historically highly extractive—taking much of the natural wealth of its colonies including opium, cotton, spices, textiles, tea and more—and that the world’s finite resources cannot support this type of parasitic, unsustainable development for countries such as India and Togo the way it did for Euro-America (Payne 2005; Beinart and Hughes 2007). Apart from extracting natural resources, colonialism also left a legacy of debt (see *Figure 5*). For example, as African colonies gained independence in the 1960s and 1970s⁶¹ many were immediately assigned debt in order to “repay colonizers for ‘development’ done during the period of colonialism such as the building of roads and other infrastructure” (Broverman 2014). In Africa alone, these debts totaled \$59 billion (ibid.)

The tendency to forget this history of colonialism and the fact that these countries were actively made poor has made the vast economic differences between “developing” and “developed” countries seem as natural as their cultural differences. Edward Said’s *Orientalism* and the concept of “othering,” posits that the West came to define itself as everything the

⁵⁸ Here I am referring not just to limitations in addressing child migration, but also in addressing any other important issue or “indicator of development” such as life expectancy, literacy rate, infant mortality rate, and many others (Malik 2013).

⁵⁹ In 2013 Togo was ranked 159th out of 189, in the “Low Human Development” tier and India is ranked 136th out of 189, in the “Medium Human Development” tier of UNDP’s Human Development Report, an annual ranking of countries based on certain development indicators (Malik 2013).

⁶⁰ This quote might be apocryphal, but it is still a powerful idea.

⁶¹ Togo gained independence from France on January 13, 1963 and India from British rule on August 15, 1947.

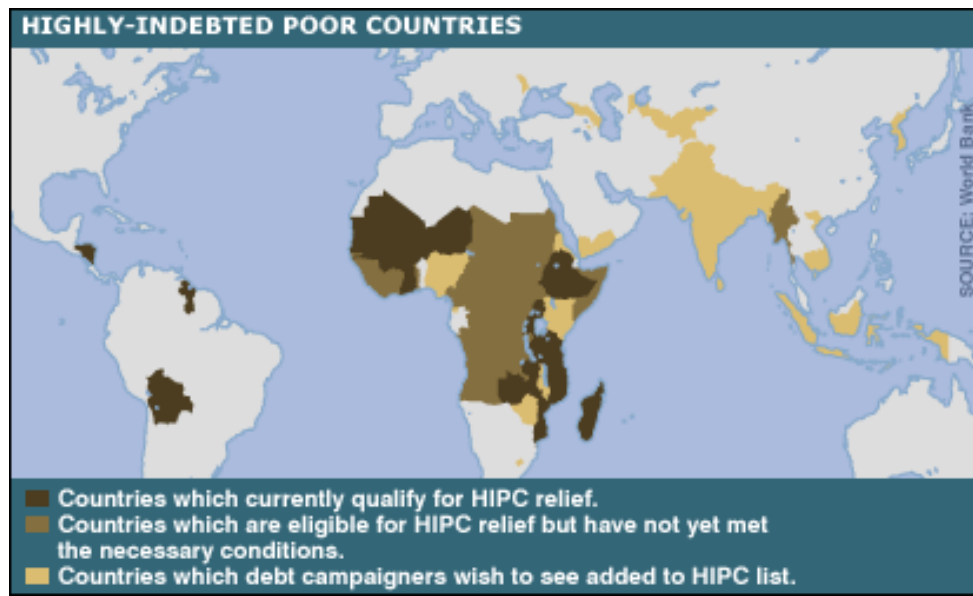


Figure 5

Source: ("G8 Reaches Deal for World's Poor" 2005)

the Orient it enters (Davidson 2011, 7). This internalized superiority is seen at play, for example, in the British response to the practice of *sati*⁶³ in colonial India. Even though *sati* "never affected more than a tiny proportion of widows, the rite achieved a disproportionate prominence in the colonial imagination, becoming an icon for Hindu 'otherness'" (Major, 4). The practice was outlawed in 1829 and, as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak famously wrote in the essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?", this colonial reaction embodied what would become a common idiom--"white men saving brown women from brown men," or more generally, that the third world needed the West to save it from itself (Spivak 1988). This particular case was seen as establishing a moral basis for imperialism, and the British saw themselves as heroic and civilized, having freed these Indian widows from the barbaric, evil traditions of their society (ibid.). Because of flexible positional superiority, the irony of Britain's own oppression of women during the same period,⁶⁴ namely the enslavement of women (and men) from its colonies and the denial of women's right to vote in Britain, was obscured.

Borne of this self-fulfilling idea of superiority are plenty of other examples of Western moral imperatives, such as the crusade against female genital cutting (FGC).⁶⁵ The human rights

Orient⁶² was not. Fundamentally "against all those non-European peoples and cultures," the West established an enduring, hegemonic relationship of "flexible positional superiority" in which it "never loses the relative upper hand," no matter what kind of relationship with

⁶² Said, living and writing from Palestine and Western educated, was writing specifically about Europe's relationship with the Middle East and Asia, but this idea and the term "Orient" can be applied to relationships between most all colonizers and colonized.

⁶³ *Sati* is the immolation of recently widowed Hindu woman, typically on her deceased husband's funeral pyre (Major, 3).

⁶⁴ Slavery was not outlawed in Britain until 1833 and women were not given the right to vote until the 1832 Reform Act.

⁶⁵ Female genital cutting or Female genital mutilation (FGM), also known as female circumcision, is the partial or complete removal of the external female genitals for cultural rather than medical reasons, occurs to varying degrees in different countries. Among many groups it is upheld as a cultural/religious practice and merely symbolic rather than a method to forcibly restrict female sexuality. Western feminist and human rights arguments that it inhibits the ability of women to have orgasms have been largely disproved by studies that show that with the most common types of FGM, 80-

discourse surrounding child labor and child trafficking is very similar. To Westerners, *sati*, FGC, child labor and child trafficking seem unambiguously bad and amount to egregious human rights abuses, but this “relativist human rights discourse resists cross-cultural engagement” and thus the full complexity of these issues is not understood (Lewis 2009, 4). The moral impulse to act, save, and solve, even with the best of intentions and the perceived victims’ “best interest” at heart, is ultimately a manifestation of the West’s global paternalism and internalized superiority. Without complete information, the solutions offered (or rather, imposed) can have serious consequences⁶⁶.

This lesson⁶⁷ is constantly retaught and seemingly never learned. The negative effects can also be seen in the aftermath of the Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs)⁶⁸ and other extreme top-down measures (designed by the IMF and World Bank) meant to “save” poor countries by assisting their economic development (Broverman 2014). Instead of alleviating poverty in countries that had implemented SAPs, cheap imports from forced trade liberalization undermined local farmers, agrarian communities collapsed, people flooded urban centers in search of alternate employment, the quality of public health and education decreased dramatically, social services deteriorated, and income rates per capita remained stagnant or fell (Broverman 2014, Joseph 1996). Looking back, almost all economists agree SAPs have increased poverty (Broverman 2014). Notably, the government of Malawi was able to “defy its lenders and return to subsidizing corn and fertilizer” (ibid.). This reversed many of the negative effects of SAPs and the country began exporting food once more (ibid.). Even so, for most countries the IMF and the World Bank continue to insist that they prioritize SAP debt repayments⁶⁹ over spending on healthcare, education, and other social programs (ibid.). The details of SAPs and the ethics of debt relief are outside the scope of this paper, but the devastating effects such top-down policies, especially in sub-Saharan African countries, help point to the need for a

90% of women still can (Catania et al. 2007). Like the response to *sati*, the western reaction to FGM is another example of “‘relativist’ human rights discourse that resists cross-cultural engagement” (Lewis 2009, 4).

⁶⁶ In fact, after *sati* was outlawed, the “fear of religious erosion” and heightened anger at the British colonizers caused an *increase* in the prevalence of *sati* because it became a symbol of resistance to British imperialism. (Major, 1;8).

⁶⁷ That when the West intervenes under misinformation or culturally-specific ideas of morality or development, it often make things worse.

⁶⁸ SAPs were large loans given to developing countries with many strings attached. The conditions of most SAPs centered on required changes to government and economic structures. Recipients were required to reduce government spending (on health care, education, etc); privatize most public services (such as education and health care, which began to charge user fees); liberalize trade (import more foreign products, clearly a stipulation meant to benefit the West); focus on the production of exports rather than local consumption; and eliminate many subsidies on food, fuel, and medicine (Broverman 2014).

⁶⁹ Despite these difficult tradeoffs, these countries are repaying their debt, but interest payments threaten to keep them in a never-ending cycle of poverty. In fact, From 1970-2002 \$294 billion were loaned to Africa and \$260 billion were repaid, but that still leaves the difference and another \$230 billion in interest accrued and any debt imposed on new countries post-colonialism (Broverman 2014). If countries do not make these payments, they not only lose credibility should they ever need another loan, but they risk being saddled with trade-related sanctions in which donor countries will stop buying their exports (Broverman 2014).

prominent shift towards grassroots movements and bottom-up policy initiatives if the underlying issues of child migration, such as poverty, are to be effectively addressed.

In the brief example of Malawi under SAPs, the country was made worse off because top-down ideas originating in Geneva were assumed to be superior and imposed from outside, echoing a neocolonial dynamic that dismisses local knowledge, like the Malawian government's understanding of its own culture and economic history. Because of this paternalistic and "West knows best" attitude toward low-income countries, what the IMF and World Bank failed to consider when designing the SAPs is that the people experiencing a particular problem, like economic under-development, often know what would need to be done to ameliorate the situation, but they may need support to implement these ideas. This is similar to child migrants having agency (knowledge of their situation) but being simultaneously vulnerable (needing support to mitigate bad outcomes), and disregarding a country's existing way of negotiating a situation and imposing a foreign strategy is analogous to disregarding children's agency and imposing interventions meant to "save" them. Having situated the attempts to "solve" the child labor and child trafficking problems of the third world in this larger historical context of development, and considering the precedent of outside forces often doing more harm than good, it should be clear why there must be a reduction of Western-influenced, top-down policy in favor of more localized, grassroots initiatives.

3.6 Bottom-up Grassroots Movements and the Importance of Local Knowledge

Tani was faced with an ethical problem. As the government representative for the Ministry of Affaires Sociales in this particular village, he had been called to the gendarmerie where two girls had been apprehended on the Togolese border with Benin. One was 18 years old and one was 17. The 2005 law on child trafficking in Togo clearly states that if a child is under 18, he or she must be stopped, especially if in the company of an intermediary or suspected intermediary who is 18 years or older. Despite this, Tani says he "found himself with a problem." He felt conflicted. He tells me the 17-year-old "had dropped out of school and she wasn't doing anything. Elle doit se débrouiller. Pourquoi l'interdire? – she must get by somehow, so why stop her?" He acknowledges that "it is true, she may encounter difficulties there [in Benin], but her parents are poor and we have very limited options for children like her. The law says to put kids like her into ateliers or shelters, but there are none. If local NGOs have sufficient funding, we pay their fees and put them back in school⁷⁰, but this is not always possible."

Similarly to the Malawi case, but at a community rather than national level, Tani's indecision in this situation shows just how crucial local knowledge is for creating policy that will work on the ground. Tani was not sure what the best thing to do was because he was caught

⁷⁰ Presumably with a scholarship or *kit scolaire*.

between the law and his own understanding that abiding by the law in this case would not make the girl better off. The girl's family is poor and she has dropped out of school, but she is 17 years old and likely traveling with a friend. Because there are no viable options for her, the decision in her "best interest" might have been to let her go to Benin. Local people are much more equipped to make these decisions than international institutions. Tani recognized the failure of top-down interventions and understood that limited resources meant that there was no structure behind the law, no working institutions to back it up. At this local level people like Tani can interpret the context of a child's specific situation. Local knowledge is thus key for creating effective policy that is nuanced enough to address the blurred lines of "thin" agency.

Bottom-up grassroots movements and interventions that privilege this local knowledge need to be supported, for people and communities living the reality of some phenomenon, often know what it would take to address the situation but might not have the means to do so. The following intervention examples are not perfect models, but they are a step in the right direction because they give a voice to the community and to children themselves:

1. Village Committees:

Village committees were set up in Togo in 2000 to function as "social surveillance" and monitor children attempting to leave the village (*Measures to Combat Trafficking* 2006, 90). Children "at risk" are identified and suspect departures of children are reported to the local authorities in a sort of "early warning system" (80). The committees also facilitate the "reintegration of repatriated trafficked children (80). The structure mirrors that of the national government in that the head of the whole network of committees is the Interpol chief, at the prefecture level the head is the Prefect, and at the local level the leader is the chief of the village. As of 2003, 150 village committees were in operation on a voluntary basis (90).

This is a model to move towards because it involves the local community and the local police, but it is not a true Togolese initiative. The literature on practical interventions in Togo states that these committees were actually part of a program "aimed at fighting human trafficking, supported by ILO-IPEC and funded by the U.S. Department of Labor" (*Measures to Combat Trafficking* 2006, 90). This explains why the language of Western IGOs is used in describing the functions of the committees—"they are at the frontline of the fight against trafficking," "1,500 children have been resettled," "the program aims to increase the capacity building of parents as a partial solution to the human trafficking problem" (ibid.).

This language assumes that there is a problem, that the problem is human trafficking, and that there is a solution to be worked toward. While this does not leave very much room for the existence of independent child migrants and their, at times, very positive experiences, it is promising that it is at least involving and supporting the parents and community leaders. This program would benefit from some sort of forum where parents, children, and village leaders can come together to discuss the issues surrounding each case. It is possible that if this network were truly a "home-grown" intervention, there would be less reliance on the language of victimization and trafficking and more room to acknowledge independent child migrants (as they are locally understood) and their own opinions.

2. UNICEF Children's Congress

In August 2005 UNICEF implemented a "children's congress program" in Nigeria. In each state, one child (aged 10-17) is chosen by the local government as a representative (Consulate Lagos 2005, 05LAGOS1361). The congress meets in the capital "for moderated discussions of civil rights and the evils of human trafficking" (ibid). Each child representative is then expected to return to his or her community and present a report of the congress proceedings. "UNICEF claims that the progress and positive effects of the program are significant" (ibid).

In this example one can again see how language such as the "evils of human trafficking" might have come from a Western sensationalized understanding of the different types of child migration, but it is a promising initiative in that it gives children agency and honors their role as meaning-makers in their communities.

3. Grassroots Social Movement

In her dissertation, Campoamor highlights an organized initiative for change "called MANTHOC (The National Movement of Child and Adolescent Workers-Children of Christian Laborers⁷¹), a grassroots group almost four decades old [that] functions as a vehicle through which working children and adolescents, who call themselves NATs (Child and Adolescent Workers) demand recognition as social actors" (Campoamor 2012, 210). These children seek legitimacy "by directly challenging the orthodox ways that the Peruvian state and transnational development institutions, like the United Nations, seek to stigmatize and eradicate child labor" (ibid.).

Campoamor goes on to explain that MANTHOC was founded in 1976 by a man named Alejandro Cussianovich and two European philosophers, and that although a group of working children in Lima were also actively involved with its inception and the movement enacted a form of communication that "challenged the conceptualization of adult-child relationships as inherently, or even necessarily, hierarchical" (Campoamor 2012, 214), Cussianovich is nevertheless "the movement's ideologue" (ibid.). Further, she references how a woman she spoke to at MANTHOC's 30th anniversary conference told her that she "[doesn't] believe the discourse," saying, "*No es protagonismo*," in reference to one of MANTHOC's key ideological positions, "that children are protagonists, leaders and agents" (216). Campoamor reasons that these women saw "a disconnect between MANTHOC's counter-hegemonic aims and its reproduction of the modes of subjectivization that dominant disciplinary institutions employ...[suggesting] that MANTHOC's official discourse might overshadow, or even silence, NAT's varied experiences and forms of expression" (ibid.).

Despite these claims that the movement might not truly reflect the voices of the children it seeks to empower, MANTHOC does seem to be a true grassroots movement. It capitalizes on the local knowledge that work is a reality, and a necessity, in many children's lives and fights against the uniform categorization of children's work as condemnable child labor, rejecting this imposition from transnational forces.

⁷¹ *Movimiento Nacional de Niños y Adolescentes Trabajadores- Hijos de Obreros Christianos* (Campoamor 2012, 210).

Although there are few true examples of initiatives like MANTHOC, theorized and executed by local communities or even national governments, that escape the influence of international laws and the dominant trafficking and child labor discourse, examples like the first two show that interventions are at least increasingly involving both children and their communities. Because a lot of the pitfalls in law, government policies, IGO and foreign NGO programming come from an incomplete understanding of the local context, true grassroots movements against the negative effects of child migration using local knowledge might be the most effective.

But what happens when these grassroots movements need financial support for long-term success? How would they receive this aid without having to adopt the perhaps incongruous agendas of the money-lending bodies? When the national governments cannot afford to allocate funds, these initiatives do need the financial support of the international community and foreign donors, but with fewer strings attached and fewer ideas imposed. This would take incredible humility on part of international actors, humility that goes against a history of assumed superiority. There must be a move toward supporting local people in their own efforts, rather than trying to save them, just as there should be support for child migrants rather than just interventions to protect them.

Conclusions and Recommendations for Further Research

The value in supporting local knowledge and grassroots initiatives does not mean that there is nothing countries with prevalent child migration can learn or use from outside sources or actors. In fact, Western countries and international IGOs, because of their financial resources, have the distinct ability to conduct research around the world, comparing the phenomenon of child migration and the effects of current initiatives in many different countries. Moreover, they have the responsibility to share this information with those who could benefit from it, but they should not impose their own ideas about how to best address it. Instead, through ethnographic and pro-child research they can add the voices, stories, and opinions of the people most affected by child migration to the growing body of knowledge that will inform future policy. They can use their relative position in the world as a vehicle for relaying the concerns of these individuals or communities to the highest levels of decision-making power.

Returning to the driving question of this project, articulated in the introduction, I have examined the ways in which the dominant discourse on child trafficking and child labor is incongruous with the real economic predicaments of independent child migrants. I have also posited ways to rethink normative understandings of childhood and labor in order to allow for children's agency. The last part of the question, "how might we modify policy accordingly in order to mitigate the negative consequences of the migration of independent child migrants?" proved to be the most difficult.

I cannot rewrite these laws and even giving suggestions to that end is outside the scope of this paper. In fact, it may be that legal instruments such as the CRC, the WFCLC, and the Palermo Protocol will always be simplistic and reductionist, and necessarily so, for in order to protect children who *are* in extremely dangerous circumstances at the hands of criminals, the laws must hold everyone to the same rigid standards, and leave little room for nuanced interpretation. However, in Chapter 1 I pointed out some of the flaws in these prevailing legal instruments and in the Chapter 2 migrant profiles showed how they are incongruent with the lives of many real individuals.

These laws have prompted both national governments and the practitioner community (NGOs/IGOs) to adopt a particular set of interventions, explored in Chapter 3, many of which have their own pitfalls. I examined the current policy interventions at various levels of authority and their shortcomings, and with these in mind I now offer the following as ways in which policy could at least ameliorate the bad outcomes of youth migration and make their experiences more successful: offering educational vouchers for children who migrate to earn school fees; hiring child specialists and engaging local people to intervene in raids and repatriation where poorly trained law-enforcement might have otherwise had jurisdiction; giving children the choice of education *and* skills-training; building more low-cost skills-training institutes like STEP Academy; designing rural employment schemes that offer an income truly competitive to that which migrants would have earned at destination; and offering counseling

for children at destination--salary mediation, healthcare services, and general support at destination like Aajeevika Bureau does for adult migrants—in the place of simply raids. Although many of these could be successful with the right support, we do not know where they would work best or why.

The answer, then, to the last part of my multi-part research question is that we do not yet have a working strategy for designing policy that considers children's agency and its constraints because these are "themes that until now have been under-researched" (Bluebond-Lagner and Korbin 2007, 243). Though somewhat unsatisfying, it does not mean that creating policy that is inclusive of child migrants is impossible. It means that there is definitely room for improvement in existing policy and a great need for further research. Before any culturally-appropriate, pro-child, sustainable policy recommendations can be made, there is a knowledge gap that still needs to be closed.

In order to create this type of nuanced policy, this future research needs to be more than just an increased volume of the type of studies that have been done by IGOs like the IOM, UNDP, UNICEF, and ILO-IPEC. That type of research, though it is improving as independent child migrants gain more visibility, is marked by charts and numbers instead of names and stories. In trying to grasp the big picture, they generalize and create binaries like the title I ironically chose—Independent Child Migrants in the Developing World: victims of child labor and child trafficking, or autonomous economic actors? The answer to this question is, of course, "both." These migrants are a mix of both and wherever they lie on the spectrum between "victim of exploitation" and "autonomous actor," they need support, not just protection.

Therefore, the creating of truly effective policy requires further research not just by child-rights advocates and IGOs, but by pro-child researchers and academics, who understand the importance of the child's voice and participation in the research. Further, my research was limited to the analysis of sending regions. Future research should allow for the exploration of sending regions, destinations, and everything in between, encompassing the whole cycle of migration. More needs to be understood about how and why children make the decision to migrate, the structural factors that affect this decision, and the circumstances that might predict good or bad outcomes of migration at destination. More research needs to be done to determine which interventions work in which kind of communities and why. Even if these answers are uncovered, communities should be approached with options for interventions, not templates. Most importantly, the voices of children and their communities must be heard and their values respected.

These pro-child investigations must be paired with first, ethnography-informed studies that value local knowledge, encourage listening, and privilege the participatory rights of all human beings rather than imposing Western "best interest" assumptions, and second, by true grassroots initiatives and studies not merely informed but *conducted* by local people in which solutions come forth organically from those most affected by the issue at hand instead of the historic top-down approach. Although it might not solve all of the underlying problems of child migration, policy borne of research and initiatives like these is more likely to be effective in

supporting child migrants and their communities because it would acknowledge complex differences in the history, culture, and other important facets of local contexts rather than attempting to serve as a template which presumes applicability to any community, region, or even country in the developing world. Policy borne of these efforts would instead be the result of a productive marriage of public policy and cultural anthropology, policy informed by ethnographic studies

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Appendix

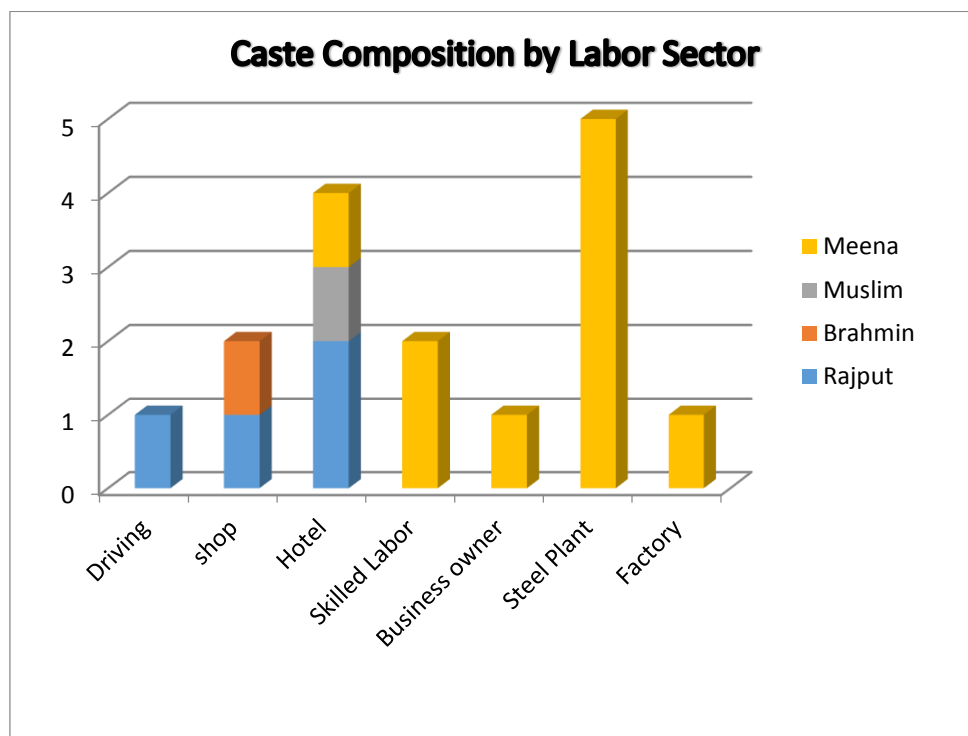


Figure 6

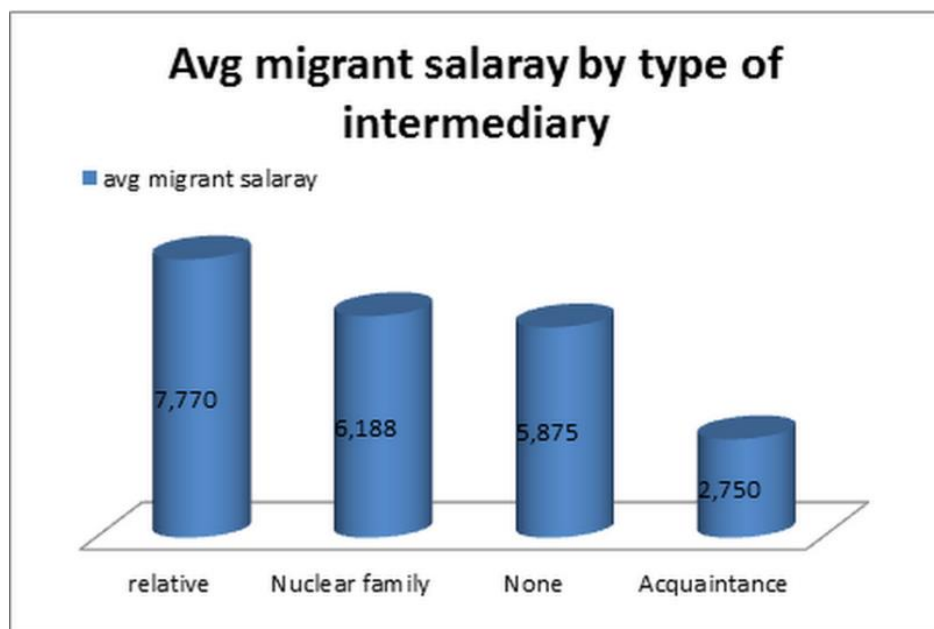


Figure 7 (Salary reported in rupees)

Proxy Measure of Agency from Study in India (n=18)

Agency (5-16)- higher number = higher agency	Coding
Age when left	12-14 = 1 15-17 = 2 18-20 = 3
Last Grade Completed	No school ever = 1 Grade 1st-5th = 2 Grade 6th-8th = 3 Grade 9th + = 4
Whose decision?	Parents/other adult = 1 Combination = 2 Migrant himself = 3
Parents Knew?	Yes = 1 Sort of = 2 No = 3
Intermediary	Acquaintance = 1 Relative = 2 Nuclear Family/ Close Friend = 3 None = 3

Table 2

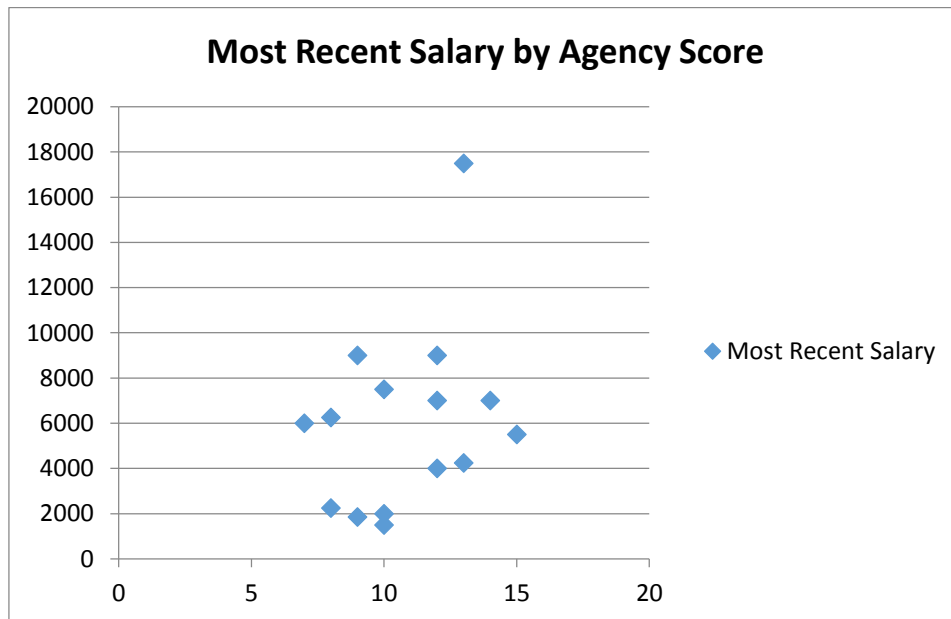


Figure 8